

*The seals on the cover represent the two sides of  
The Congressional Award Medal. The Capitol Dome is surrounded  
by 50 stars, representing the states of the Union,  
and is bordered by the words, “Congressional Award.”  
Bordering the eagle are the words that best define  
the qualities found in those who have earned this honor,  
**“Initiative – Service – Achievement”***

# The Congressional Award



*Public Law 96-114, The Congressional Award Act*

*2019 Gold Medal Ceremony*

*The Congress of the United States  
United States Capitol  
Washington, D.C.*

It is my honor and privilege to applaud the achievements of the recipients of the 2019 Congressional Award Gold Medal. These outstanding 538 young Americans have challenged themselves and made lasting contributions to local communities across this great nation. This is our largest class of Gold Medalists to date!

The Gold Medal Ceremony is the culmination of a long journey for our awardees. For each participant the journey was unique, but one that likely included many highs and lows. The Congressional Award program was designed to instill a wide range of life skills and attributes that are necessary to navigate and overcome obstacles on the path to success - both in the classroom and beyond. And now that each young person has met these challenges and attained their goals, we hope they will continue to amaze and inspire us by pursuing their passions, utilizing their talents, and demonstrating an unwavering commitment to making the world a better place.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we would like to extend our great appreciation to our partner organizations and sponsors for their continued support. Each organization plays a vital role in our ability to deliver this program, especially in this time of tremendous growth and development. Without your sincere commitment to our mission, this opportunity for our youth would not be possible.

And finally, we thank the teachers, parents, community leaders, and loved ones for sharing their resources and personal time. You have made an incredible difference in the lives of these young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paxton K. Baker', with a stylized, overlapping flourish at the end.

Paxton K. Baker  
Chairman  
National Board of Directors

## EARNING THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD



### **Voluntary Public Service**

Sharing time and talents for the benefit of others.



### **Personal Development**

Pursuing a new interest or advancing to another level in an ongoing interest.



### **Physical Fitness**

Improving one's quality of life.



### **Expedition/ Exploration**

Immersion in an unfamiliar environment or culture.

Bronze, Silver, and Gold Certificates and Medals are presented to all eligible young people. The Bronze and Silver Medals are presented by Members of Congress at the local level. The Gold Medal Ceremony is held annually in the U.S. Capitol.

No limits are placed on the number of Congressional Awards presented each year. Any young person, ages 13 ½ - 23, can earn the award. There are no deadlines, scholastic requirements, or nominating processes, and participants work entirely at their own pace. The Congressional Award Gold Medal is the pinnacle of achievement.

*Complete details on age of entry and required hours are available from the National Office at [www.congressionalaward.org](http://www.congressionalaward.org)*

---

# *Gold Medal Program*



# **2019 GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY I**

*Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota,  
Mississippi, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Rhode  
Island, South Carolina, Utah, Wyoming*

**June 20, 2019**

**Congressional Auditorium**

**U.S. Capitol Visitor Center | 10:00 a.m.**

**Introduction by Master of Ceremonies**

Mary Bruce, ABC News

**Presentation of the Colors and National Anthem**

U.S. Capitol Police

**Invocation**

Fr. Patrick J. Conroy

United States House of Representatives Chaplain

**Welcoming Remarks**

Mr. Paxton Baker

Chairman of the Board

**Presentation of the Horizon Award to Gail Miller**

**Presentation of**

**The Congressional Award Gold Medals**

Members of the United States Congress

**Closing Remarks**

# **2019 GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY II**

*Alabama, Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Illinois, Indiana,  
Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Nevada, New York,  
Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas*

**June 20, 2019**

**Congressional Auditorium**

**U.S. Capitol Visitor Center | 12:30 p.m.**

**Introduction by Master of Ceremonies**

Anna Palmer, POLITICO

**Presentation of the Colors and National Anthem**

U.S. Capitol Police

**Invocation**

Fr. Patrick J. Conroy

United States House of Representatives Chaplain

**Welcoming Remarks**

Mr. Paxton Baker

Chairman of the Board

**Presentation of**

**The Congressional Award Gold Medals**

Members of the United States Congress

**Closing Remarks**

# **2019 GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY III**

*Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, Oregon,  
Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, Washington*

**June 20, 2019**

**Congressional Auditorium**

**U.S. Capitol Visitor Center | 3:00 p.m.**

**Introduction by Master of Ceremonies**

Chip Reid, CBS News

**Presentation of the Colors and National Anthem**

U.S. Capitol Police

**Invocation**

Admiral Barry Black

United States Senate Chaplain

**Welcoming Remarks**

Mr. Paxton Baker

Chairman of the Board

**Presentation of the Inspiration Award to Mrs. Lynn Lyons**

**Presentation of**

**The Congressional Award Gold Medals**

Members of the United States Congress

**Closing Remarks**



## INSPIRATION AWARD – LYNN LYONS



Lynn Lyons has served as a Congressional Award Advisor since 1998. She's worked with over 500 students in Martin, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie counties in Florida. Having guided nearly 200 participants to the pinnacle of the program, The Congressional Award Gold Medal, Lynn understands the intricacies of what it takes to earn

Congress' highest honor for youth. She has served on the Board of Directors since 2006, most notably contributing her talents to the Program Committee. Prior to retirement, Mrs. Lyons was an elementary educator for 28 years.

Mrs. Lyons is a graduate of Rutgers University.

## HORIZON AWARD – GAIL MILLER



Gail Miller is the owner and chairman of the board of the Larry H. Miller Group of Companies. Gail and her late husband, Larry, grew their business into one of the largest privately-owned companies in the United States.

Beginning with the purchase of Toyota of Murray (Utah) in 1979, the Larry H. Miller Group is now comprised of more than 80 businesses and properties operating in 46 states and employing more than 10,000 people.

Gail and Larry created a strong legacy of giving back to the communities in which they do business. They founded Larry H. Miller Charities, a nonprofit organization focused on health and education programs that support women and children's issues. Gail also presides over the Larry H. & Gail Miller Family Foundation, which supports religious, charitable, scientific, literary, and educational programs.

Gail has been recognized with many public honors including Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Utah and Salt Lake Community College, and an honorary Doctor of Humanities from Weber State University. She is the recipient of the Salt Lake Chamber's highest award "A Giant in Our City," as well as the internationally-recognized ATHENA Award.

In 2012, Gail married Kim Wilson, who is a senior attorney with one of Salt Lake City's oldest law firms, Snow, Christensen and Martineau. Gail and Kim enjoy traveling, serving others and spending time with their large family. They make their home in Salt Lake City, Utah.

---

*Congratulations to all of the  
2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

*2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists are listed by last name.  
Asterisk (\*) denotes Gold Medalists receiving a STEM Star.*



*Autobiographies submitted by 2019 Congressional Award Gold  
Medalists are listed by Congressional District and then last name.*

## *2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

Chantel Abdulai, Arizona\*  
Nour Abouyoussef, Colorado\*  
Flora Ahn, California  
Siddhant Ahuja, Texas\*  
Smriti Ahuja, Texas  
Michael Akerson, Massachusetts  
Juan Aleman IV, Pennsylvania\*  
Abigail Amato, North Carolina\*  
Lillian Amato, North Carolina\*  
Bahara Amiri, Colorado  
Candace Anderson, Maryland\*  
Lorraine Angelakos, Florida\*  
Zachary Asselta, New Jersey  
Alice Attebery, Wyoming  
Mary Aumen, Nebraska\*  
Dua Azhar, Utah  
Eunice Bae, New Jersey\*  
Yuna Baek, California  
Bree Baker, Missouri  
Ajay Balaraman, Illinois\*  
Mercedes Bartels, Wyoming  
Angelina Bayrak, North Carolina  
Tierra Beard, Kentucky  
Isaac Beasey, Virginia  
Hunter Beaton, Texas  
Alyssa Bedard, Wyoming  
Tanvi Bekal, New Jersey  
Sydney Bell, Wyoming  
Jessica Bennett, Florida\*  
Emily Bergwall, Connecticut  
Makaylah Berkovitz, Wyoming  
Logan Bhamidipaty, California  
Pooja Bhatnagar, California  
McAllister Bianchi, Massachusetts\*  
Andre Biehl, New Jersey\*  
Ted Bigler, Oklahoma\*  
Madison Bindl, Wyoming  
Sai Ashish Bommasani, Ohio\*  
Kamin Bond, North Carolina\*  
Max Bowman, Illinois\*  
Ryan Brady, Ohio  
Kristen Brennan, New York  
Thaddaeus Broussard, Indiana\*  
Abigail Brown, California\*  
Madeline Brown, California  
Abigaël Bylow, Wyoming  
Amanda Cai, California  
Julia Canellis, Illinois  
Asher Carr-Chellman, Idaho  
Aila Carr-Chellman, Idaho  
Jules Carr-Chellman, Idaho  
Jennifer Carvel, Florida  
Sai Chalasani, Indiana\*  
Andrew Chang, California  
Casey Chang, California  
Justin Chang, Massachusetts\*  
Ann Chen, California  
Ruby Chen, Pennsylvania \*  
Yujin Choe, California  
Jiseon Choi, California  
Jung-yoon Choi, California\*  
Ridhi Choragudi, Georgia\*  
Harsh Choudhary, Massachusetts\*  
David Choung, California  
Todd Christian, Texas  
Evelyn Chung, California\*  
Joshua Yoon-Ho Chung, California  
Jerry Clark, Mississippi  
Robert Daniel Claud, Illinois  
Lee Clyne, Washington, D.C.\*  
Muhammed Colak, New York  
Elijah Cole, Wyoming  
Carson Cook, North Carolina  
Grace Cousens, Ohio  
Paige Cromley, Texas\*  
Connor Crowe, Texas  
Morgan Cryder, Arizona\*  
Robert Cuff, New Jersey  
Saachi Dalal, Texas\*  
Wesley Dale, California  
Rucheer Dave, North Carolina\*  
William David, North Carolina\*  
Daimion Davis, Utah  
Jessi Davis, Mississippi  
Sydney Davis, Idaho\*  
Jean-Pierre De Jesus-De La Cruz,  
Massachusetts\*  
Emily De Wulf, Hawaii  
Mykenzie Dean, Wyoming  
Rohan Desarapu, Ohio\*  
Harmeen Dhariwal, California  
Samantha Dijohn, Wyoming

## *2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

Julia Dillenbeck, California  
Ciara DiMaiolo, New Jersey  
Evan Doliszny, New Jersey\*  
Joseph Dong, California\*  
Sarah Douglass, Arkansas  
Noah Dreiling, Wyoming  
Katelin Drennan, Utah\*  
Kimberly Drennan, Utah\*  
Caitlin D'Souza, New Jersey\*  
Cameron Durham, Kentucky  
Amanda Dynak, Illinois\*  
Lauren Eavenson, Florida\*  
David Edenfield, Georgia\*  
Ashlyn Edmisten, North Carolina  
Cole Ellis, Florida\*  
Sophia Emmoth, Georgia  
Andrew Engebretsen, Tennessee\*  
Michael LaShon Everhart, Florida  
Fatima Faizi, Utah  
Hailey Farrington, Washington  
Joseph Farroha, Maryland\*  
Amanda Feagans, Indiana\*  
Abigail Fearneyhough, Wyoming  
Benjamin Ferguson, Kentucky  
Claire Fernandez, California  
Jack Ferreira, Connecticut  
Taylor Fields, Mississippi  
Rebekah Fodale, Pennsylvania\*  
James Foran, New Jersey  
Lucas Fortwengler, Kentucky  
Andrew Harrison Freund, Missouri\*  
Robert Trey Freund III, Missouri\*  
Teresa Fundter, California\*  
Andrew Funk, California  
Scott Funk, California  
Jacob Furfine, Illinois  
Orion Gangopadhyay, Maryland\*  
Daniel Garza, Texas  
Jessica Gates, Mississippi\*  
Katherine Gates, Florida  
Garrett Gerda, North Carolina\*  
Geoffrey Gerda, North Carolina\*  
Emma Geringer, Wyoming  
Ashley Gibson, Texas\*  
Jillian Gillen, Kansas  
Trenton Gin, California\*  
Alexander Goetschius, Florida  
Cole Goggio, Illinois\*  
Madison Gorman, New York  
Hattie Rose Greene, North Carolina\*  
Warren Griggs, Alabama  
Andrew Gronning, Wyoming  
Abbey Grooms, Missouri  
Logan Grosz, Wyoming  
Demetrius Gunn, Kentucky  
Agrayan Gupta, Indiana\*  
Aryaman Gupta, Indiana\*  
Blake Guzy, New York  
Paul Hager, Ohio  
Genevieve Hager von Carlowitz, Ohio  
Zachary Hammer, Nevada\*  
Becky Han, New York  
Jeseung Han, California  
Ye-Eun Han, California  
Keelie Hanley, Florida  
Raleigh Hanley, Florida  
Aasim Hawa, Kansas\*  
James Hayes, Wyoming  
Cole Heinrich, North Carolina  
Madison Henry, Connecticut  
Gunnar Hensley, South Carolina\*  
Jennifer Ho, California\*  
Jonah Holland, Mississippi  
Sydney Holles, Wyoming  
Andrew Hong, California  
Joseph Hong, New York  
Isabelle Houseman, Wyoming  
Royce Howley, Florida  
Mirabel Zixin Hu, California  
William Huang, Pennsylvania\*  
Yijin Huang, Missouri\*  
Jacqueline Huff, California  
Priscilla Hui, California  
Lane Hutchison, Wyoming  
Dayeon Hwang, California  
Seung Hyun Hwang, California\*  
Justin Hyon, California  
Tasneem Ibrahim, New York\*  
Carmina Inguito, California  
Anushka Iyer, New Jersey\*  
Saiomkar Iyer, New York  
Kylah Jackson, North Carolina\*

# *2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

Cassandra James, Florida  
Ritvik Janamsetty, Nevada\*  
Victoria Jawork, Pennsylvania  
Annika Jenkins, Virginia  
Julia Jeong, New Jersey  
Marvin Jiang, Michigan  
Ryan Jiang, Arizona  
Alex Jin, Maryland  
Andrew Jockelle, California  
Olivia Johanns, Missouri  
Baird Johnson, New York  
Caroline Johnson, Wyoming  
Jayla Johnson, Wyoming  
Katie Johnson, Wyoming\*  
Makala Johnson, Wyoming\*  
Julia Jones, Pennsylvania  
Lorin Jones, Wyoming  
Michaiah Jones, Wyoming  
Mindy Jun, California  
David Jung, California\*  
Sky Jung, California  
Samantha Jurkowski, Wyoming  
Shravan Kalahasthy, Ohio  
Sachi Kalvakaalva, Texas\*  
Sami Kandil, Virginia  
Pat Kane, Oklahoma\*  
Rachel Kang, California  
Kunal Kanwar, New Jersey\*  
Nihal Kariparduc, Utah\*  
Baird Kazazian, Georgia  
Mamoon Khalid, Texas  
Maisha Khanum, California\*  
Anne Kickert, Virginia\*  
Ami Kim, California  
Andrew Kim, California  
Ann Clare Kim, California  
Bridgette Kim, Maryland\*  
Calvin Kim, California  
Elissa Kim, California  
Evan Kim, California  
Faith Kim, California\*  
Grace Goeun Kim, California  
Grant Kim, California  
Josephine Kim, California  
Junhee Kim, California  
Renny Kim, California  
Stephanie Kim, California  
Steve Kim, California  
Sungmin Kim, California  
Tiffany Kim, California  
Grayson King, North Carolina\*  
Bella Kissell, South Carolina  
Alex Kim-Man Klassen, California  
Thomas Klingonsmith, Utah  
Maeve Knepper, Wyoming  
Lauren Knoll, North Dakota  
Kamry Knotwell, Wyoming  
Ishita Kode, Ohio\*  
Hannah Komroff, Florida\*  
Weronika Konwent, Texas  
Varun Kota, Virginia\*  
Alexandra Kukal, New Jersey  
Erin Kwak, California  
Yohan Kwak, California  
James Joseph Laberee, New Jersey\*  
Baya Laimeche, Arizona\*  
Shikha Lakhi, Texas  
Selena Landa, Wyoming  
Ruhika Lankalapalli, Florida\*  
Shannon Leahy, New Jersey\*  
Megan Leavitt, Wyoming  
Madeleine LeBeau, Virginia\*  
Araceli Ledesma, Wyoming\*  
Chaerin Chloe Lee, California  
Claire Lee, California  
David Lee, California  
Ethan Lee, California  
Ethan Lee, California  
Jae Hoon Lee, California\*  
Jay Lee, California\*  
Jeong Eun Lee, California\*  
Jiin Lee, California  
Jisung Lee, California  
Justin Lee, California  
Justin Lee, Georgia  
Kendra Lee, California  
Mark Lee, Florida  
Samantha Lee, Virginia  
Seohyeong Lee, California  
Suhwoo Lee, California  
Sunghee Lee, California  
Avery Lehr, Minnesota

## *2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

Carmen Leon, Wyoming  
Salomee Levy, Nevada  
Arianna Lewis, Wyoming  
Christine Li, Tennessee\*  
Kelly Li, California\*  
Tina Xiaotian Li, California\*  
Daniel Lim, California\*  
Henry Lin, New York\*  
Jacob Lindsey, Mississippi  
Kyler Liscinski, Idaho\*  
Jimmy Liu, Texas\*  
Nicole Jiayi Liu, California  
Mackenzie Lo, California\*  
Quincey Lochard, Idaho\*  
Megan Loh, California\*  
William Longworth, Maryland\*  
Lucas Lopatofsky, Kansas  
Morgan Lyons, Mississippi  
Yanxin Ma, Massachusetts  
Taylor Maese, Wyoming  
Vinit Majmudar, California\*  
Aditi Malay, Kansas\*  
Sruthi Mannepalli, North Carolina\*  
Jazy Manoukian, Wyoming  
Zoey Mares, Wyoming\*  
Mackenzie Marler, Wyoming  
Nathaniel Marsters, Missouri  
Vivian Marsters, Missouri  
Alexis Massie, Arizona  
Kenichi Matsuo, California  
Garrett May, South Carolina\*  
Trevor McArthur, Washington  
Jacqueline McCabe, New York  
Olivia McClain, Wisconsin\*  
Jake McGillion-Moore, Connecticut\*  
Micah McKnight, South Carolina  
Noah McKnight, South Carolina  
Dwyn McNeil, Massachusetts  
Raheem Memon, Texas\*  
Rehman Memon, Texas  
Alyssa Miller, Wyoming  
Claudia Miller, Wyoming\*  
Harrison Miller, South Carolina  
Michael Miller, Illinois  
Teiryne Miller, Mississippi  
Fernando Miranda-Fred, Texas\*

Audrey Mitchell, Wyoming  
Matthew Mitchell, Texas  
Kasey Mize, Virginia  
Adam Mohmand, Colorado\*  
Kevin Mok, California  
Cammie Moore, Mississippi\*  
Junuenth Morales, Wyoming  
Evan Morgan, California\*  
Abby Morillon, Wyoming  
Mitchell Morrison, Tennessee  
Elias Mosby, Texas  
Samuel Mosby, Texas  
Emily Kate Mosley, Texas\*  
Johanna Moter, Wyoming\*  
Quentin Moter, Wyoming  
Lucas Moyon, South Carolina\*  
Rhea Mudnal, Texas  
Manas Mudunuri, Georgia  
Josef Mueller, Pennsylvania  
William Mun, California  
James Munroe, Connecticut  
Connor Murphy, Florida\*  
Tommy Neal, Wyoming  
Manaswini Nedunuri, Ohio\*  
Grace Nemec, Texas\*  
Paris Nguyen, California\*  
Thanh Nguyen, Wyoming  
Aislinn Niimi, North Carolina  
Hyerin Noh, California  
Laura Noronha, California  
Maura Null, Florida  
Hannah Nyquist, New York  
Varshini Odayar, Ohio\*  
Harrison O'Donnell, Florida\*  
Yuna Oh, California  
Anthony O'Leary, California  
Adelle Ostrom, Wyoming  
Kendra Ostrom, Wyoming  
Sena Oten, California\*  
Gabriella Owens, Connecticut  
Audrey Pack, Illinois\*  
Katherine Pack, Illinois\*  
Ali Jean Paksima, Florida  
Thomas Pallan, Maryland  
Sophia Pao, New York\*  
Krishna Parikh, New Jersey\*

## *2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

Aylen Park, California  
Brian Park, California  
Chelsie Park, California  
Elisa Park, California  
Eric Park, California\*  
Esther Park, California  
Hailey Park, California  
Heejae Park, California  
Hyoungjin Park, California  
Julie Park, California  
Noah Park, California  
Rachel Park, California  
Rachel Gia Park, California  
Steven Park, California  
Sung Yun Park, California  
Weena Park, California  
Zane Pasha, Nevada  
Tiffany Passehl, Wyoming  
Khushi Patel, New Jersey  
Vishreshtha Pathak, Texas\*  
Akshat Patwardhan, California  
Grace Pecheck, California  
Kacilyn Pegues, Mississippi\*  
Isha Pema, California  
Mariah Perez, Florida  
Cody Perkins, Wyoming  
Christian Petrisko, Florida\*  
Derek Petrisko, Florida\*  
Callie Philips, Mississippi\*  
Lillian Pinkham, Florida  
Julianna Pizzato, Wyoming  
Cris Plunkett, California  
Nathan Pollon, California\*  
Ethan Posard, California\*  
Ruth Potter, Wyoming  
Matthew Powers, Florida\*  
Michael Powers, Florida\*  
Katherine Prior, New York\*  
Manvi Punukollu, Virginia\*  
Emily Purifoy, Wyoming  
Haley Purifoy, Wyoming  
Krishant Putrevu, New Jersey\*  
Bailey Quitter, Ohio\*  
Pavan Raghupathy, Ohio  
Timothy Rah, Virginia  
Archit Raichura, California\*  
Anjali Raju, Ohio\*  
Nevedita Ramachandran, Texas\*  
Nikita Ramachandran, Texas\*  
Alaina Randolph, North Carolina\*  
Chloe Rankin, Wyoming\*  
Dylan Raymond, Wyoming  
Trevor Rey, Missouri  
Nicole Reyes-Aguilar, Wyoming  
Elizabeth Rice, Maryland  
Rosemary Richards, Arizona  
Sydney Richardson, New Hampshire  
Grace Ritschard, Wyoming  
John R. Robinson, Florida\*  
Neha Rokkam, Ohio\*  
Cristian Roma, Texas  
Ben Romero, Texas\*  
Bryson Rose, North Carolina  
Kayla Rothstein, Virginia  
Amy Ryan, Iowa  
Connor Ryan, Massachusetts\*  
Jana Sabri, Texas  
Lauren Salsgiver, Wyoming\*  
Wilson Sands, Texas  
Nathanael Sangster, Kentucky\*  
Alex Satterwhite, Kentucky  
Kathryn Sauerwein, Wyoming  
Emmanuel Augustin Scaria, Ohio  
Camden Schmidt, Wyoming  
Arya Selvam, Washington\*  
Alderic Senecal, Kentucky  
Melina Seng, Virginia\*  
Rene Servin, California  
Darshi Shah, New York\*  
Abigail Shameklis, Wyoming  
Allison Sharer, Texas\*  
Ashley Sharer, Texas\*  
Ayush Sharma, Pennsylvania\*  
Mikayla Shelton, Mississippi\*  
Sophia Shi, California  
Jaeyong Shim, California  
Cutler Shiver, Georgia\*  
Jakob Shuey, Wyoming  
Maurissa Shumpert, Mississippi\*  
Sarah Shwani, Utah  
Jonathan Simak, Maryland\*  
Katherine Simic, California\*



## *2019 Congressional Award Gold Medalists*

Brett Sims, North Carolina\*  
Benjamin Smith, Maryland\*  
Ciara Smith, Virginia\*  
Tanner Smith, Florida  
Helen Sohn, California\*  
Annette Son, California\*  
Joshua Son, California  
Kenneth Song, California  
Caitlin Souers, Missouri  
Grace Sowa, Rhode Island  
Divya Srihari, Missouri\*  
Taylor Stevens, Florida\*  
Sarah Stewart, Washington  
Noah Stiles, New York  
Colby Stockton, Wyoming  
Olivia Stump, Oklahoma  
Margaret (Sissy) Sugarman, California\*  
Albert Sun, California  
Colman Sun, California  
Seraphine Sun, California  
Lindsey Suncine, Florida  
Jacqueline Sutera, New York  
Sierra Tagman, Florida  
David Takacs, New Jersey  
Nicole Talkington, Wyoming  
Chatura Tamirisakandala, Ohio\*  
Freedom Scott Guildford River Tansley,  
Vermont\*  
Tristan Taylor, Illinois  
Ambrose Terneus, Nebraska  
Robin Mia Tian, Maryland  
John Tomlinson, Kansas  
Lillian Tougas, Florida\*  
Patrick Townsend, Oregon  
Loyalty Traster-Lee, California  
Vicky Trieu, New Jersey  
Ashley Turnage, Texas  
Kenneth Jr. Um, California  
Kristina Vaher, North Carolina  
Sarah Valley, Virginia\*  
Amelia Van Winkle, Wyoming  
Shravya Vasireddy, Florida\*  
Samith Venkatesh, Ohio  
Vahin Vuppalanchi, Indiana\*  
Heema Vyas, Ohio\*  
Colin Wang, California

David Wang, Texas\*  
Jiahui Wang, California  
Johnny Young Wang, California\*  
Phillip Wang, Washington\*  
CJ Weddle, Mississippi  
Cassidy Weibel, Wyoming  
Eleccia Wells, Wyoming  
Chuhan Wen, California  
T'ajahlon White, Mississippi\*  
Micayla Whitfield, Wyoming  
Jasmine Willis, Idaho  
Taylor Wilson, Wyoming  
Rose Wittenmye, Washington\*  
Samantha Wong, California\*  
Richard Wu, California\*  
Jack Xiao, California  
Zifeng Xie, California  
Qixiang Xiong, California  
Allison Yang, Pennsylvania  
Alec Yarnoff, Pennsylvania  
Andre Yeung, California\*  
Aaron Yi, California  
Danniel Yi, California  
David Dongwon Yi, California  
Brian Yoon, California  
Na Won Yoon, California  
Patrick Yu, California  
Emily Yuan, California  
Peter Ze, California  
Tiffany Zha, California  
Albert Zhang, Georgia  
LinYue Zhang, California  
Olivia Zhou, New York  
Yixuan Zhu, California

---

**Warren Griggs**

*Birmingham, Alabama*

*Advisor: Daniel Strunk*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

I spent over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service working on projects which have positively impacted my community. These included building a walkway at the Alabama Veterans Memorial Park, building benches at schools, and cleaning up walking trails. This gave me a greater appreciation for my community. For Personal Development, I honed my acting and stagecraft skills. I was able to land two major roles as a freshman at my college. For my Physical Fitness goals, I completed a challenging 116-mile hike at Philmont Scout Ranch. I walked daily for one year, lifted weights three times a week to build muscle, and completed many training hikes. Doing this helped me learn that I can do anything I set my mind to. Finally, for my Expedition, I completed the Northern Tier Boy Scout High Adventure Trip to Atikokan Ontario Canada. We canoed 45 miles in 6 days. I carried all of my own gear, including food, and learned how to preserve the environment by effectively leaving no trace of our visit. I had a great experience working on my Congressional Award Gold Medal and learned so much. I was very proud of myself for overcoming challenges and feeling a sense of accomplishment.

**Freedom Scott Guildford River Tansley**

*England, Armed Forces Europe*

*Advisor: Hillery Williams*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Girls and Boys Clubs of America, Red Cross, United States Air Force*

Through the Boy Scouts of America, I did numerous volunteer activities. These activities benefited United States Air Force bases both in Europe and local communities in host nations. I worked hard, learned skills, met new people, and saw how the work of just one person can have a large environmental impact or improve the lives of many. Many of my Congressional Award activities were STEM based. In Personal Development, my goals were to learn more about farming and agriculture, specifically poultry-keeping. Not only did I learn new concepts and skills, but I was also able to use this knowledge to teach other youth. In the area of Physical Fitness, I worked hard to increase my strength, endurance, and running performance. The Award was a catalyst to give me focus and direction to achieve my goals. Through participation in this program, my overall health and fitness levels have improved significantly, making me a much better athlete. My Expedition included a canoe trip across 3 counties in England. I traveled through remote areas of Fenland and Breckland; areas of rich ecology with rare flora and fauna, designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas, and Conservation Nature Reserves. The Congressional Award taught me many new skills and pushed me to learn and try things outside of my comfort zone, making me more well-rounded and a better citizen.

---

**Sarah Douglass**

*Little Rock, Arkansas*

*Advisor: Kimberly Cook*

*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity*

I was a volunteer counselor at a camp for kids with medical conditions and participated in a variety of community events as part of my school's Beta Club chapter. As the Beta Volunteer Coordinator junior year, I helped my peers get involved in the community by researching and sharing opportunities. For the Personal Development category, I auditioned and performed in a school musical. I gained confidence in public speaking and collaboration skills. I also explored my passion for working with youth while babysitting and helping with children's ministry at my church. For Physical Fitness, I balanced service, work, and academics with playing varsity and club volleyball. The Congressional Award helped me set attainable goals to improve my athletic performance and leadership skills. For my Exploration, I planned an educational and memorable trip for myself and my family to explore the Outer Banks of North Carolina. It was great to explore this beautiful part of my home state while learning to plan for my family's diverse interests and adapt to unpredictable weather. The Congressional Award helped me develop my goal-setting skills and get out of my comfort zone, which in turn gave me confidence and great new experiences.

**Rosemary Richards**

*Tucson, Arizona*

*Advisor: Jennifer Ball*

My favorite hours spent in Voluntary Public Service were with the Down Syndrome Association. Since it was local, I was able to get many of my friends involved who would not normally have connections with the amazing DS community. Camping, venturing, and learning environmental survival skills were a huge part of my Personal Development goals. I loved experiencing the outdoors in several states and climates and learning about the different ecosystems. My first Congressional Award Physical Fitness goal was to hike 100 miles... and I never stopped. I continued to add challenges to my goals including hiking the Grand Canyon and overnight backpacking. I loved the challenges, the great conversations when hiking with family and friends, and of course the views. For my Exploration, I traveled to Tokyo after 2 years of enjoying Japanese art. I was able to navigate the transportation systems and visited all of the cultural and art centers I had studied before traveling. I am grateful for the Congressional Award program which gave me a reason to organize my time and priorities and to push my abilities.

---

**Chantel Abdulai**

*Phoenix, Arizona*

*Advisor: Asli Karatas*

To earn my Gold Medal, I volunteered with my Science Olympiad team as a student coach, which meant mentoring team members and making sure the club ran smoothly. In addition, I was a teacher's aide, so I helped grade papers and create new worksheets. For Personal Development, I decided to work on improving my SAT score by at least 200 points. I studied at least two hours a week and used various studying tools, such as Khan Academy and Kaplan Prep Books. For the Physical Fitness portion, I swam 100 laps every other day during the summer months. During the other months, I walked one mile, three times a week. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a five-night camping trip to Northern Arizona. There, I learned about new cultures and discovered Arizona's great history. During my time working towards my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I learned to make goals for myself, but more importantly, I learned to be persistent in achieving these goals.

**Baya Laimeche**

*Phoenix, Arizona*

*Advisor: Asli Karatas*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service goals, I spent more than 400 hours mentoring a science team and volunteering with various organizations including Girl Scouts, Helping Hand for Relief and Development, and my school's chapter of the National Honor Society. For my Personal Development goals, I memorized chapters of the Quran, the Muslim holy book, and was able to commit over a dozen chapters to memory. I also studied for the SAT exam by completing online programs and taking practice tests. I contributed over 200 hours towards both of my Personal Development goals. For my Physical Fitness goals, I practiced soccer to increase my playing stamina from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, making me capable of playing a full soccer game. I also ran on a treadmill at the gym to decrease the time it took me to run a mile, and I decreased that time by more than two minutes. For my Exploration, I traveled to Algiers, Algeria and Istanbul, Turkey to compare the traditions of Eid to the cultural norms of my own community. I immersed myself in the preparation for Eid in Algiers and the celebration of the Islamic holiday in Istanbul to gain a full experience during my trip. The Congressional Award gave me the opportunity to set defined goals for myself and achieve them in an efficient and lasting manner. I learned many vital qualities such as leadership, cooperation, initiative, and dedication, and learned to apply myself in the best possible way to accomplish great things.

---

**Morgan Cryder**

*Mesa, Arizona*

*Advisor: Karin Moffitt*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at my local animal shelter and a local observatory. At the shelter, I assisted with animal adoptions and keeping the animals comfortable. At the observatory, I was a telescope operator and helped educate the public. For Personal Development, I attended drum practice each week and worked on playing songs on my own. I can now sight-read music and play the drums. For my Physical Fitness activity, I practiced soccer four times a week. My goal was to become a more technical player and eventually I could easily execute more than five new moves. Finally, for my Expedition I traveled to different geological formations throughout the state of Arizona. I explored the Grand Canyon, the Meteor Crater, the Red Rocks of Sedona, Lake Havasu, Horseshoe Bend, and Antelope Slot Canyon. Earning the Congressional Award was an amazing experience and I am thankful for the opportunity to grow and expand my horizons with the guidance of this program!

**Ryan Jiang**

*Chandler, Arizona*

*Advisor: Shangyun Sun*

For Voluntary Public Service, I consistently volunteered at Feed My Starving Children, packing bags of food to ship to developing nations where basic nutrition is difficult to come by. I also volunteered with a local youth center, ICAN Youth Center, working with underprivileged children. For Personal Development, I participated extensively in Public Forum Debate, working to improve my own personal advocacy skills as well as argumentation. I also learned to utilize my voice for action. For Physical Fitness, I played soccer at all levels: club, school, and recreational. Doing so provided me with a unique team environment I wasn't exposed to as much in other activities. For my Expedition, I went on a backpacking trip, hiking for miles before setting up camp every night. I went with my father and younger brother, engaging in a host of activities including fishing and cooking.

---

**Tiffany Zha**

*El Dorado Hills, California*

*Advisor: Ann Pendleton*

In order to raise mental health awareness, I initiated an Active Minds chapter that hosted nationally acclaimed speakers, launched a peer counselling program, created a website, and wrote articles in a local newspaper to inspire community members to stand up against silence. My passion for linguistics motivated me to learn my third foreign language - Italian - in addition to French and Mandarin. I studied vocabulary, reading, writing, and listening online, as well as practiced speaking on my own daily for the last two years and continue to do so. In addition to daily stretching for figure skating and dance, I began weight training, ran a 5K weekly, swam, and incorporated calisthenics exercises. I increased my pushups from 32 to 70 and completed 1000 sit-ups in one session, becoming stronger mentally and physically. In Quebec and Montreal, I practiced speaking French to locals in restaurants and out in public. Immersed in Quebecois culture, I learned about cathedrals, historic battlefields, native tribes. I sampled Quebecois cuisine and experienced the maple tradition. Even Canadian dollars are maple-scented! In pursuing long-term goals for the past two years, I've learned to set grand goals, chase after them indefinitely, trust my instincts, and know that one day, I'll surmount whatever summit stood in my way, plan in one hand, goals in the other, and a huge smile on my face.

**Yuna Oh**

*Apple Valley, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at a local hospital where I interacted with patients and made blankets for them. I also participated in various beach cleanups by partnering with organizations such as Heal the Bay, and planted trees and shrubs with Bolsa Chica. As for Personal Development, I took piano lessons and prepared for higher levels of Certificate of Merit by practicing independently and participating in several recitals. For Physical Fitness, I joined my school's tennis team and worked to improve on different techniques by working with my teammates. Finally, for my Exploration, I studied the unique environment and culture of the Big Island of Hawaii by learning from locals and researching on my own.

---

**Alex Klassen**

*Tracy, California*

*Advisor: Dr. Zachary Boswell*

I accomplished 400 hours of community service at my community hospital, senior center, and the City of Tracy recreational Department. Through all those community engagements, I developed a strong understanding of my community's needs and saw the difference I could make in the lives of others. For Personal Development, I improved my leadership skills and public speaking skills through holding the position of Tracy College Bound class president, student council vice president, and City of Tracy Youth Advisory Commissioner. For Physical Fitness, I became a better basketball player and tennis player by setting goals on my fitness level by conditioning, running drills, practicing with my teams, and participating in tournaments. For Exploration, I learned researching, planning, and budgeting for a trip to Italy. I also learned about Medici cultural, Renaissance arts, and Medici history. By participating in the Congressional Award, I have gained a sense of personal satisfaction and accomplishment. I watched myself become a better goal-setter. I also developed new skills and new talents. This Award program empowers me to become a better student and citizen.

**Cris Plunkett**

*San Francisco, California, California*

*Advisor: Alex Lazar*

For Voluntary Public Service, my overall goal was volunteering my time towards various community service organizations that seek to alleviate poverty and those lesser off in San Francisco. Simultaneously through my honors society, I was given numerous platforms to give back to my university, which was critical for me. For my Personal Development activity, I was appointed to serve on the San Francisco Youth Commission by Mayor London Breed to serve SF Youth of District 5 and the Housing, Recreation, and Transportation Committee (HRT Committee). For Physical Fitness, I advocated for and authored resolutions to positively impact and raise up SF youth and Transitional Aged Youth Jogging. For the Exploration program area, I traveled to Mexico City for Día De Los Muertos to experience a holiday in another country and understand the cultural differences that exist. My goal was to learn more and explore something that I understand so little about, and moreover escape the many narratives told by the media. Earning the Congressional Award has been a privilege and an honor, and I am so incredibly grateful to be given the experiences to succeed in my respective environment.

---

**Casey Chang**  
*Millbrae, California*  
*Advisor: Sandy Springer*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I spent over 400 hours tutoring kids at my local community center. I helped children in grades K-7 with their schoolwork as well as helped them develop their Chinese speaking skills. For Personal Development, I began to learn how to play chess with a professional chess player. Two times a week, I would practice how to strategize how to play as well as learn on my free time. I can now play against elite players and even win. For my Physical Fitness portion, I swam almost 6/7 days of the week to train for my high school championship. I would swim about 5,000 yards every day, focusing on improving my technique more and more each time. Finally, for my Exploration I travelled to Japan for a five-night trip. I planned the entire trip myself; figuring out where to adventure, what to see, and what to eat. Overall, I had such an impactful experience in earning my Gold Medal and learned valuable lessons and skills that have helped me grow as a person.

**Samantha Wong**  
*Redwood City, California*  
*Advisor: Ann Ohsawa*

I volunteered at the Hiller Aviation Museum and at Medaka no Gakko, a Japanese cultural camp. I also earned a scholarship to attend the Global Leadership Academy with other teens around the world and partnered with Stanford's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital to donate activity kits. For Personal Development, I worked on improving my skills in the kitchen by cooking more for my family. I also interviewed local women in STEM from a variety of different jobs. I wrote short biographies about them and published them on my website in order to inspire others to pursue STEM activities. For the Physical Fitness requirement, I participated in sports in all the seasons offered throughout middle school and worked hard enough to be a starter on my school's varsity basketball team since freshman year. I was also chosen as a captain this past year. Lastly, I planned our family trip up the West Coast for my Expedition. We travelled to Seattle, Washington and Vancouver and Victoria, Canada and immersed ourselves in the culture and nature there. The Congressional Award provided me the opportunities to explore my passions and give back to my community, and I am so grateful for the experience.



---

**David Jung**

*San Ramon, California*

*Advisor: Walter Kim*

For Voluntary Public Service, I focused my volunteering on education and mentorship. Through my educational nonprofit, Empower Educate Support Youth (EESY) to Change, I assisted low-performing and low-income students. Additionally, I provided fencing coaching at a local community college. For Personal Development, I honed my oratory and business-focused skills. In high school, I competed actively in Congressional Debate and Future Business Leaders of America to improve my critical thinking. These skills came to great use at national invitationals and tournaments. During my four years, I practiced fencing and intensive cross-training activities to supplement my primary sport. For fencing, I took private lessons for my skill improvement and competed in regional tournaments. For cross-training, I frequently utilized weights and also took part in swimming. For my Exploration, I visited Salinas Valley and Monterey Bay of California. Throughout my journey, my focus was on the immigrant experience and environmental conservation. I interviewed regional historians regarding immigration patterns and searched for wildlife at Point Lobos State Park. Through the Congressional Award, I was able to hone important organizational skills and learn to maximize my community impact for youth education and low-income support.

**Kelly Li**

*San Ramon, California*

*Advisor: Calvin Xu*

In earning my Gold Medal, I completed 440 hours of Voluntary Public Service. I ran a free swimming program in China to help teach local children water safety. In my local community, I offered tutoring services and other activities to help fellow students. For Personal Development, I learned how to program through online courses, then I self-studied java to take the AP Computer Science exam. I then self-prepared to participate in competitive programming at USACO competitions. For my Physical Fitness, I improved my swimming times by improving my technique and undergoing a recovery process for my knee injuries. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a 5-day trip from Changsha to Beijing by researching the local transportation and places to go to enhance my experience there and learn some of China's history. Through the Congressional Award, I was able to take more responsibility for activities and events I did in my life.

---

**Archit Raichura**  
*Fremont, California*  
*Advisor: Yogesh Kaudan*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered through Boy Scouts by working on others' Eagle Projects and various service projects. I also volunteered as a science lab instructor, teaching elementary school kids science through experiments. I also volunteered at my local library. For Personal Development, I worked on my Eagle Project and my merit badges. My goal was to attain all the requirements to apply for my Eagle Scout conference, which I have accomplished. I will be an Eagle Scout soon. For Physical Fitness, my goal was to increase my BMI to a healthy BMI from underweight, through a more frequent fitness regimen, which involved playing ultimate frisbee and football at the park. My Expedition was a weeklong leadership camp where I led the rest of the group. As a staff member, I was one of the people in charge of planning the week out. At times, the path to the Gold Medal ahead seemed long and treacherous, but it taught me resilience. Additionally, learning to clearly set my goals and plan how to work towards them is a lifelong skill I am grateful to have developed.

**Richard Wu**  
*Pleasanton, California*  
*Advisor: Judy Zhang*

I founded and led a math program to help kids gain interest for math over the last four years. Over the summer, we had two-hour sessions three times each week and we taught fun math games and introduced the concepts of math associated with each of them. I played piano many hours a week to develop my musical sense and piano playing skills. I can now sight read longer and tougher passages. I swam at least five hours a week in a local swim team, which dropped my times significantly over the years. These practices also improved my endurance as I could now swim longer sets. Swimming also taught me time management as I had to learn how to balance sports and academics. While I was in Texas, I planned a road trip that would allow us to travel from Dallas to Houston while visiting many national forests and visitor attractions. I learned how to plan my own trip, realizing that it takes a lot of coordination and adjust the trip when it didn't go as planned. Overall, the process to earn the Congressional Award aided my personal growth a lot and motivated me to try new experiences. It taught me how to persevere at my tasks and go outside of my comfort zone.

---

**Vinit Majmudar**

*Fremont, California*

*Advisor: Ray Scherer*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

At the Mission San Jose Little League (MSJLL), I was an assistant coach in the minor division and helped coach a team of 12-14-year-olds. I also volunteered at the Tri-City Food Bank and prepared and handed out meals to the local homeless population. I interned in the Stanford University Center for Advanced Lung Disease, assisted in a graduate study at the Maharbiz Lab Group, and was a research assistant at the Bustamante Lab at UC Berkeley. I also took a digital photography course and used the acquired skills to capture several images. I worked out at my local gym for 5 days a week, developed a healthy eating plan, and explored the different aspects of weightlifting. I utilized internet research and personal trainers at the gym to develop a workout plan that helped me reach my weightlifting goals. I traveled to Philmont Scout Ranch and completed the National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience (NAYLE). I learned skills to be a dynamic and effective leader through hands-on, practical applications while hiking through the New Mexico mountain ranges.

**Logan Bhamidipaty**

*San Jose, California*

*Advisor: Padmasri Bhetanabhotla*

To earn the Gold Medal, my Voluntary Public Service focused on helping individuals with their U.S. immigration applications. Also, to help reduce food insecurity, I volunteered at the regional food bank by packing fresh produce and dry goods for distribution to community pantries. For my Personal Development, I wanted to improve my Mandarin language skills. As a non-native language learner, I took Mandarin lessons and volunteered at Chinese cultural events to improve my skills. I learned over 200+ words. For my Physical Fitness, I swam and did yoga. I discovered the breathing and stretching exercises from yoga helped with my swimming. I went from JV to Varsity swim team in the same year. For my Exploration, I traveled through the Kensai region of Japan for five days. I studied the architectural style differences between Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. I also focused on the region's Edo period history as well as its contemporary culture. Through the course of earning the Congressional Award, I've met individuals who've supported this 4-year journey and encouraged me to persevere.

---

**Daniel Lim**

*Mountain View, California*

*Advisor: Terence Lee*

I founded the Computer Engineers of the Next Generation Club to provide free 7-week coding classes to under-represented elementary students in the Computer Science field in addition to refurbishing old laptops through EqOpTech to provide equal technology access to all students. I challenged myself in coding and completed all the full Java course in CodingBat. I also improved my Mandarin by taking Mandarin classes every week for two years. Meeting the goal of improving my running times in cross-country and swimming took a lot of perseverance and persistence. I trained every week to build my muscles, develop my stamina and finally achieved my goals. My 5-day, 4-night Singapore cultural immersion trip exposed me to the different cultures, customs, food and religion of the four main races in Singapore: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian. It has broadened my horizons to help me see things from others' viewpoints given their upbringing. I learned that if I set a goal for myself, and gradually inch my way there, I will eventually attain it.

**Chelsie Park**

*Palo Alto, California*

*Advisor: Sonah Kang*

I dedicated over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the KA Santa Clara Senior League teaching violin classes to the elderly. I taught my students from the basics of reading music, all the way to playing a short waltz or folk song. For my Personal Development, I memorized and performed the first movement of the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in D Major. Not only was I able to overcome and learn the technical and physical challenges imposed by the piece, but I also developed my sense of artistic expression. For my Physical Fitness piece, I decided to train for and run a half marathon. I gradually increased my running times and basic fitness and strength to complete the half marathon. Lastly, for the Expedition portion, I planned a 6-day trip to local cities in my area to explore and discover African culture. I tried authentic food from all parts of Africa and visited many shops and museums featuring African art. The Congressional Award experience taught me perseverance, the value of goal-setting, and led me on an incredible journey of self-discovery as well as world discovery.

---

**Akshat Patwardhan**  
*Saratoga, California*  
*Advisor: Sunita Jayakar*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the El Camino Hospital and Indian Community Center. I helped discharge patients and run errands around the hospital. At the Indian Community Center, I was a head counselor and helped organize a variety of summer camps. For Personal Development, I took an honors level geometry course as well as an Introduction to Java course. This was a self-paced course and I advanced my knowledge in geometry, as well as introduced myself to a little bit of computer science. For Physical Fitness, I wanted to focus and hone my soccer skills, so I joined the Los Gatos United 01B club team and practiced and played games over 5 times a week. For my Expedition, I completely independently planned a trip to Florida and Utah to visit and learn about the historic national parks. We hiked and took in the breathtaking views while also camping. The Congressional Award was a very enriching experience that taught me how to not only help the community but also pursue activities that would benefit myself, which eventually helped me explore my passions in life.

**Julie Park**  
*San Jose, California*  
*Advisor: Sara Yu*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goal, I volunteered at my local hospital and created an organization that provides a local school district's pre-school health assessment center with books. To complete my Personal Development goal, I helped physicians create communities that provide medical care to those who have difficulties in finding access to such resources. To do so, I shadowed health-care professionals and directly provided medical attention to those in need. For my Physical Fitness goal, which was to decrease the time it takes for me to run one mile, I improved my endurance by gradually running longer distances. To increase the power of my strides, I focused on workouts that target various individual regions of the body. Out of a two-week stay in South Korea, I planned five consecutive days and four nights' worth of adventures. To complete my goal, I mapped out popular locations including historical landmarks, researched the most common methods of transportation, and arranged a place to stay throughout the trip. The Congressional Award has challenged me to simultaneously address multiple aspects of my life, and it has stimulated an unprecedented amount of personal growth.

---

**Andrew Funk**  
*Gonzales, California*  
*Advisor: Sandra Banuelos*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

I have used benefits of the small town that I live in to complete a series of programs, including the Youth Summer Camp Program, Boy Scouts, and with the Teen Conservation Leadership program through the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Some of the goals that I had completed to achieve the Personal Development section of the program were joining the Gonzales Youth Council, which is a small program created by the City Council and the School Board, as well as several programs through Boy Scouts. In order for me to successfully complete the Physical Fitness portion of the program, I had to take that leap of faith and try out for sports that I'd never imagine myself participating in, like cross country and track, while continuing to play sports such as baseball and basketball. My Expedition included multiple trainings, two rescheduled itineraries due to wildfire cancellations and ultimately backpacking the Big Basin Redwoods National Park located off the California coast near Santa Cruz. My overall experience in obtaining the Congressional Award has been a blast; I have personally learned so many great skills over the course of earning my Gold Medal, such as public speaking skills and improved leadership training from the Monterey Bay Aquarium Program.

**Scott Funk**  
*Gonzales, California*  
*Advisor: Rick Sanchez*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, where I would teach people about conservation and sea life. I also helped organize and volunteer at community events as part of my local Interact Club and Boy Scout troop. To complete my Personal Development goals, I joined various clubs like My Strength, where I learned more about society and how we can improve it. I joined our city's local Youth Council, which helps give youth a voice and helped me better grow and develop my communication skills. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I joined my school's track and cross-country teams and made varsity in both sports my freshmen year. I also went on to become a captain of the Varsity teams of both sports my junior year. I also was a part of my school's marching band program for four years. To complete my Expedition goals, I had to plan and carry out a 5-day backpacking trip to Big Basin. Before the trek I had to become CPR certified, take a wilderness first aid class, and plan out what we would need on the trek. On the trek, I journeyed over 40 miles and was able to bond with my troop. I believe my experience in the Congressional Award program was worthwhile and that it helped me better appreciate my community as well as help motivate me to volunteer and further develop myself in the future.

---

**Nathan Pollon**

*Arroyo Grande, California*

*Advisor: Camille DeBruin*

For my Voluntary Public Service, to promote STEM and education throughout the county, I volunteered for a local organization that refurbishes broken computers for underprivileged students. Additionally, I mentored a local middle school robotics team, teaching programming and engineering. As an avid musician, I knew I wanted to learn how to record music. For two years I worked with a local musician learning about music production and recording techniques and produced two completed tracks along with a myriad of experimental recordings. For Physical Fitness, I improved my ranking by two belts in the self-defense martial art Aikido. Through regular practice, I gained better coordination, skill, and technique. For my Exploration, I decided to explore and photograph the Colorado Rockies by organizing a three-day hiking trip.

**Rene Servin**

*Stevenson Ranch, California*

*Advisor: Fabiola Singer*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service serving marginalized members of my community. My work with Holocaust survivors and serving the homeless, autistic, poor, and abused, turned me into a dedicated and passionate social justice advocate. My Personal Development goals in leadership taught me through hands on experience that an effective leader never stops learning, and should always find ways to improve skills, gain new perspectives, and learn new approaches. I also learned that time management, making team members feel valued, & knowing how to delegate are essential skills to have. My Physical Fitness goals taught me that perseverance is honorable even when goals aren't met. Through my water polo/swim competitions, I learned the value of consistency and being proud of my best efforts. My Expedition was a trip to France to learn more about my ancestry and culture. Executing an international trip was difficult, but learning to navigate and communicate with the native language was priceless. The importance of being gracious, alert and adapting to unforeseen circumstances was key. My Congressional Award journey has brought experiences of quality and change for the better. Each and every Holocaust Survivor and person I have served has humbled and taught me compassion. Each project, experience, and individual encountered has left an indelible mark in my life.

---

**Pooja Bhatnagar**

*Thousand Oaks, California*

*Advisor: Manisha Agarwal*

I worked towards the improvement of the lives of seniors as president of a club on my high school campus, and “adopted” two local senior citizens. I also taught middle-schoolers debating skills at a local school, and supported organizations for education in India by holding fundraisers. I took voice, piano, and guitar lessons weekly, and used my skills for charity performances. I also was a varsity attorney on my school’s Mock Trial team; I practiced negotiation, speaking, and persuasion skills while creating and memorizing a court statement for competition. I attended martial arts classes and ran two miles at least twice per week and took Bollywood dance lessons on the weekend and regularly during the summer, which included performances every few months. I planned a 6-day trip to Cancún and Mayan cultural sites. I visited the Mayan archaeological sites Tulum and Chichén Itzá, the island of Isla Mujeres for an immersive experience in local culture and language, a cenote, which is a natural pit that exposes groundwater, and an eco-archaeological park. From participating in the Congressional Award program, I have gained the ability to make realistic, measurable, and challenging goals along with the discipline to pursue them over extended periods of time.

**Teresa Fundter**

*Pasadena, California*

*Advisor: Allison Dalbeck*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service. I assisted the Sierra Madre Rose Float Association by decorating their floats and training and supervising volunteers. I also volunteered at Huntington Memorial Hospital as a lobby escort, earning a badge for 100 hours of service. For Personal Development, I earned 12 patches and 45 badges through the National Park Service Junior Ranger Program. I have been to 18 National Parks and hope to one day become a Park Ranger. I also pursued my interest in writing by participating in the Write Girl program and local writing contests, of which I won 2. For Physical Fitness, I wanted to become more offense-minded in my sport, water polo, by improving my shooting accuracy and becoming faster in my transition speed. I doubled my scoring average per game from 0 goals to 2 goals and dropped 3 seconds on my 100-meter freestyle swim time. Finally, for my Expedition I brought my family on a five-day camping trip to Sequoia National Park to learn about the geological features and unique habitat that allows Sequoia trees to grow. We went on hikes, visited learning centers and museums, climbed Moro Rock, and hugged giant Sequoia trees. The Congressional Award was an amazing three-year experience that expanded my interests, challenged me, and encouraged me to be more involved in my community, all of which I am incredibly thankful for!



---

**Trenton Gin**

*San Marino, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

I volunteered with an organization called Global Youth Mission to provide humanitarian services to the underserved locally and in Mexico. I visited patients in hospitals and children at orphanages. I organized activities to do with those that we visited and created gifts to give them. Seeing that technology and information are the future for almost any industry, I challenged myself to learn to become proficient in technology and computer operations beyond what is taught in school. I found a tutor and actively used online courses to learn programming and productivity software. I wanted to explore a sport that provided me individual challenges for personal achievement as well as providing a competitive environment to develop sportsmanship character. I chose to fence using a sabre for the need to develop speed, agility, strategy, balance, reflexes, strength, and accuracy. For my Exploration, I ventured to the place of my ancestry—Myanmar. The country has been in isolation for over 50 years due to international sanctions for human rights violations. Behind the economic and social challenges, I discovered the beautiful culture, art, music, and people of the diverse ethnic tribes. Through the Congressional Award program, I found it rewarding to reach a high standard and also find a balance across the different disciplines.

**Justin Hyon**

*Sierra Madre, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I dedicated over 400 hours under the direction of Global Youth Mission. I aided in holding fundraisers, distributing blankets and other supplies, and helping to put together events for the needy in the community. For Personal Development, I improved my skills as a photographer and filmmaker on a professional level. I made short films on trips and for events, videos for community and student outreach, both for my school and for my personal passion, and accumulated a photography portfolio. For Physical Fitness, I earned a black belt in Karate, and improved the number of defensive techniques I could perform from 2 to over 30. Finally, for my Expedition, I expanded my horizons and connected with nature by spending a week in a totally different environment, Iceland, untouched by humanity.

---

**Steve Kim**

*San Marino, California*

*Advisor: Jenny Kwak*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity*

For Voluntary Public Service, I built an ADA handicap approved ramp in my community. Additionally, twice a month, I would go on hiking trails with my Boy Scouts troop to clean the trail. My Personal Development goal was to improve upon my piano skills. I have continued to practice the piano for an hour every day to perform for my friends, family, and the Certificate of Merit organization. For Physical Fitness, I attended golf classes and practice at the range every week. Every month, I would go out on the field with my parents and compete with them to see who the best golfer in the family is. For the Expedition portion, I started by planning out simple camping trips with family, friends, and Boy Scouts. As my organization and planning skills progressed, I started to plan larger trips outside of California. I explored the Boston area last summer going on the Freedom Trail and looking at the many historical sites. I have learned the importance of setting and completing my goals and how it benefits me as a person.

**Nicole Jiayi Liu**

*Temple City, California*

*Advisor: Jose Marquez*

I completed hundreds of Voluntary Public Service hours within two years. I participated in several local organizations, such as Global Youth Mission, Mentor Program at my school, Asian Youth Center and was able to help many local communities. To complete my Personal Development, I practiced piano every day and it was one of the most important daily routines in my life. For Physical Fitness, I implemented a rigorous walking program and exercised often. I always walk to places I need to go if they are not far away. To complete my Exploration goals, I visited China during winter break by myself. It was a really interesting trip and I not only learned a lot but had so much fun. I appreciate the Congressional Award for giving me many diverse experiences and encouragement to accomplish my goals.

---

**Jack Xiao**

*Claremont, California  
Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

In achieving the Gold Medal, I completed 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service. This included helping local music programs by organizing and performing in concerts, fundraising events, and festivals, as well as taking part in community outreach activities such as ESL tutoring and gift drives. For Personal Development, I sought to practice my speech and debate skills while competing at local, state, and national competitions. With speaking/research drills at weekly debate team meetings to weekend tournaments, I was able to significantly better my communication and persuasion abilities. To complete Physical Fitness, I set clear goals to improve my mile time and to increase the number of push-ups I could do in a single set. Taking part in various physical activities, from jogging/gym sessions and team sports to daily sets of push-ups, allowed me to exceed those initial goals. Last but certainly not least, my Exploration involved planning a 6-day trip to San Francisco. There, we experienced the extensive public transportation system and explored the city's history/culture through places like the Haight-Ashbury District, Japantown/Chinatown, and important landmarks. Through the Congressional Award and the enriching, life-changing lessons it taught me, I have undoubtedly grown as a person, leader, and citizen.

**Andre Yeung**

*Arcadia, California  
Advisor: Ernest Tsui  
Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service primarily by co-founding Fruit for Homeless (@fruit4homeless) to pick fruit for the homeless. My team that I built has harvested over 25,000 pounds of fruits which served more than 40,000 homeless/low-income families. For Personal Development, I took piano lesson once a week, and practiced five days a week. I have achieved level Advanced in Certificate of Merit of Music Teachers' Association of California and volunteered as a piano therapist at a local hospital. Regarding Physical Fitness, my goal was to compete on the Maple Leafs traveling hockey team. I began at lower levels and gradually improved my goal percentage which earned our team numerous tournaments, championships, and playoffs qualification. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a five-day fishing and kayaking trip in Anchorage and Seward in Alaska. I learned about the intricate salmon run and the unique formation of icebergs and glaciers. The Congressional Award was a life-changing experience that empowered me to better engage and inspire.

---

**Junhee Kim**  
*La Crescenta, California*  
*Advisor: Molly Geiser*

Through my local chapter of the Leo Club, I participated in park clean ups, serving the homeless, and providing vision care. For Personal Development, I focused on music producing, recording, composing and more. Through these activities, I trained myself to become an independent artist. For Physical Fitness, I played volleyball for two years and I was also in competitive dance for two years. For my Expedition, my friends and I went camping for the first time in Santa Barbara. We went without our parents and we cooked, planned activities, and explored around the camping area. I am really proud that I am earning the Congressional Award and I appreciate every single member of Congress who continually presents this award to youth all around the country.

**Katherine Simic**  
*Burbank, California*  
*Advisor: Whitney Crispi*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

My Voluntary Public Service goal was to serve those in Burbank who are most in need. I served the homeless through volunteering with Family Promise and Burbank Temporary Aid Center. I volunteered at food drives, made hygiene kits and lunches. I also volunteered in the Emergency Department at Providence Saint Joseph hospital. For Personal Development, I learned to play classical piano. I practiced daily and perfected Clair De Lune, Toccata in D Minor, Canon in D, and Fur Elise. For Physical Fitness, I learned proper rowing technique, became physically fit, and competed in races throughout California. My team won the 1st Place US Rowing Southwest Junior Championships and 1st Place Southern California Cup. I also figure skated and learned to land a Lutz jump. I was fortunate to explore the Galápagos Islands for my Expedition. I learned about Charles Darwin, became familiar with the native plant and animal species, and explored amazingly different terrains. This experience has compelled me to major in Biology in college. I am forever grateful to The Congressional Award for providing me the challenge to develop many skills and interests, while learning how to address the vast needs around me.

---

**Joshua Song**

*La Crescenta, California*

*Advisor: Chan Ju Kang*

*Affiliations: Key Club*

To earn the Congressional Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Volunteer Service within my community service group Hwarang Leo Club. I went to countless park cleanups at Griffith Park every Saturday, attended multiple homeless serving events, and worked locally within my community. For Personal Development I did speech and debate to help me improve my communication skills and debating skills to help me in the future when I (hopefully) become a lawyer. I am now comfortable talking to anyone without being nervous and can strike up a conversation without being awkward. For my Physical Fitness, I attended Hwarang Taekwondo to pursue my goal to one day earn a black belt. I am currently training and am a brown belt within this Taekwondo club. Finally, for my 5-day Expedition, I went with a group of 3 friends and spent 5 days learning how to cook, take care of ourselves and each other as a group, and learned many life skills that will be beneficial to me in the future. In retrospect, the Congressional Award has honestly been a great, unforgettable, and worthwhile experience that I will never forget. It has taught me valuable skills that will help me on my pathway towards my future life.

**Kenneth Um**

*La Canada Flintridge, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service under the direction of the non-profit organization Global Youth Mission and raised my school's Environmental Club participation to over 10 members. For Personal Development, I learned and practiced the ukulele six days a week at the start of my senior year. For Physical Fitness, I increased the amount of pickup basketball games I played and increased my shooting percentage by 15%. Finally, for my Exploration, I traveled to Puerto Vallarta in Mexico to not only explore an unknown area and biome but to learn about a new culture.

---

**Jiseon Choi**

*Mission Hills, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

With the non-profit organization Global Youth Mission, I provided necessities to patients in hospitals, travelled to Mexico to support orphans and medical patients, and worked at community events for my Voluntary Public Service. I also assisted cancer patients and provided food for those in need. For Personal Development, I focused on speech and debate. I have attended one tournament at least every other month continuously, developing both at my school team and home my speaking and researching skills. I have also attended a debate camp to further enhance my understanding of how to properly set up debate cases. To achieve my Physical Fitness goal, I have exercised regularly to improve muscle strength, jogged around my neighborhood with my dog, and hiked local trails. For my Exploration, I visited sights I'd never seen before, ate at restaurants I'd never heard of, and learned about different cultures of people I'd never met before. This was all through my road trip to San Francisco, Big Sur, Monterey, Hearst Castle, San Simeon beach, Cambria beach, Morro Bay, Solvang, and Santa Barbara.

**Harmeen Dhariwal**

*Reseda, California*

*Advisor: Oner Semra*

At the West Valley Regional Library, I volunteered at the Friend's Bookstore, a non-profit organization, where I organized books and helped children and the elderly with their purchases. In addition, I volunteered at my school's peer mentoring program in which I mentored students. In order to complete my Personal Development, I started to learn how to play the violin at White Oaks Music Center. Later on, I started to study for the SATs with different practice books and Khan Academy. For the Physical Fitness program area, I was able to join my high school's Students Run Los Angeles program, which trains students for months to complete the Los Angeles Marathon. For the past three years, I completed three marathons and I am looking forward to my fourth one next year. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to go to England during the summer of 2018 for my Exploration. In England, I was able to learn about British culture, history, and society. Overall, the Congressional Award Program put me into places that I didn't think I would be which I'm genuinely grateful for.

---

**Maisha Khanum**

*Reseda, California*

*Advisor: Semra Oner*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered at my local library. A typical volunteer day included sorting books and reading to visitors. To complete my Personal Development goals, I picked up the violin. I had weekly or bi-monthly lessons and I would practice every day. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I began training for a marathon. I would schedule my practice runs and races to prepare for the 26.2 miles I'd have to run. To complete my Expedition goals, I went on a trip to Sierra National Forest. During those days, I learned and applied forest ecology and environmental science.

**Rachel Park**

*Studio City, California*

*Advisor: Joseph Blassberg*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I went on a service trip to Mombasa, Kenya through the nonprofit organization mtree. There, I helped teach art classes and also interacted with the Mayan community to serve the local people. For Personal Development, I worked on my art to create better quality work and more creative projects. As a member of my school's varsity swim team, I continued to work on my 50- and 100-yard freestyle times to fulfill my Physical Fitness goals. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a trip to Italy for about a week. With my parents, we travelled to various cities and experienced the culture and tourist attractions.

---

**Grace Pécheck**

*Los Angeles, California*

*Advisor: Jill Marshall Larson*

*Affiliations: Discovery Bound NLC*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I worked with animals in need. I provided a temporary shelter to ease overpopulation in shelters, where I groomed, cleaned, and administered medicine to cats. In addition, I volunteered my time at a local shelter where I fed animals and cleaned cages. To complete my Personal Development goal of learning more about the religion Christian Science, I attended local lectures and had discussions with practitioners and Christian Science teachers. I read Science and Health by Mary Baker Eddy and other texts such as The Greatest Thing in the World. For my Physical Fitness goal, I went to horseback riding lessons weekly and practiced both Western and English riding. I also worked at a horse ranch in Colorado and competed in gymkhanas and several polocrosse tournaments. For my Exploration goal, I planned a six-day trip to Mexico. I explored the archaeological, geographical, and cultural history of Baja California, and practiced speaking Spanish. I toured historical sites and museums and even attended an authentic cooking class. I am so grateful so have been able to participate in The Congressional Award and will continue to hone all the skills I've learned from this experience.

**Laura Noronha**

*Loma Linda, California*

*Advisor: Dr. Maryam Zand*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service at local hospitals. I volunteered in the obstetrics department, helped make care-kits, and played piano in the hospital lobby. I learned through my experiences what a big difference little acts of kindness can make. For Personal Development, I focused on improving my classical piano repertoire through regular practice. During this journey, I earned the unique opportunity to play at Carnegie Hall. For my Physical fitness, I improved my mile time to under 9 minutes and ran a 5k. For my Exploration, I researched the history and architecture of the California Missions and planned a road-trip for my parents and myself along part of the El Camino Real. We drove from Carmel to San Diego, visiting 13 missions over 5 days. My Congressional Award journey helped me discover California's rich history and the satisfaction one gets from perseverance and helping others through selfless acts.



---

**Abby Brown**

*Los Angeles, California*

*Advisor: Francesca Taylor*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

My Voluntary Public Service was completed primarily through various Girl Scouts outreach projects. Such projects included sewing reusable menstrual supplies for underserved communities, collecting trash on local beaches, and hosting an event for low income mothers at a pregnancy clinic. For my Personal Development goal, I took on the challenge of working a part time job by filing medical records at a local doctor's office. Working there proved to be a tremendous learning experience, as I gained better intuition for working with others in an office environment. As a member of the golf team, my Physical Fitness goal was to improve my individual game to improve my team as a whole. In order to do this, I practiced chipping to increase my precision. I also learned new swing techniques to improve my drive by around twenty-five yards. To fulfill my goal of learning more about Japanese culture firsthand, I took a five-day Exploration trip to Japan. During my time there, I observed various cultural practices, such as taking off one's shoes in certain places. It gave me better insight into global cultural differences. Meeting with my local representative Ted Lieu gave me the awesome opportunity to meet an individual who has power to affect policy for the better in our country.

**Madeline Brown**

*Los Angeles, California*

*Advisor: Francesca Taylor*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

I participated in two hundred hours of community service under the umbrella of Girl Scouts. I participated in several activities with my troop from beach cleanups to serving at food banks. On my own time, I completed my Girl Scout Gold Award project, which was to sew diaper bags and baby hats. My Personal Development goal was to learn how to work in a medical office and use resources such as an online database to organize charts. I learned how to become certified with HIPAA law, proper phone etiquette for business/medical purposes, and how to stay organized. My Physical Fitness goal was to expand my ability to do different tosses and spins as part of color guard. After studying different tosses and spins on YouTube, I practiced and had my teammates help me achieve this. After much practice, I was able to achieve a double toss, a J toss, and a 45 toss. My Exploration goal was to more thoroughly understand Japanese culture, history, and language. I planned a trip to Japan with my grandparents where we experienced different cultural attractions, activities, and restaurants to eat at. The Congressional Award has taught me the importance of perseverance and determination in achieving my goals.

---

**Faith Kim**

*Rancho Palos Verdes, California*

*Advisor: Mrs. Darlene Vlasek*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at Kaiser Permanente South Bay and Torrance Memorial Medical Center, catering to the patients' needs and visitors' queries while also assisting nurses in managing paperwork. I also worked as a Spanish speaking liaison, translating directions for non-English speakers. For Personal Development, I developed my photography skills, expanding my subject frames and thematic photo shoots. I imitated different photographers, including Edward Weston, and used Flickr as a means of critique and feedback. I also improved my Photoshop skills through YouTube tutorials and photography online courses. In order to lower my 9-hole golf score to less than bogey game for my Physical Fitness goal, I worked on short-range shots, including putting and chipping. I also worked on iron accuracy and increasing the percentage of 'hitting the green' in regulation. I also compacted my swing to increase ball velocity and distance. For my Expedition, I camped in Yosemite for five days, hiking up natural waterfalls and biking around the campgrounds. I used this trip as an opportunity to create a nature series for my photography portfolio, snapping photos of sweeping landscapes and close-up macro shots of flowers. The Congressional Award Program has allowed me to greatly improve my life as a whole. Over the course of achieving this high award, I have improved various aspects of my life that have geared me toward success. From recreational photography to committed volunteerism, the Congressional Award has allowed me to stay in tune with the needs of my community and has taught me how to respond to such needs. The four program areas of the award have greatly impacted my future, including my interests at the collegiate level, and I truly appreciate this program's dedication to promoting student involvement and development.

**Tina Li**

*Rancho Palos Verdes, California*

*Advisor: Kristen Nelson*

I volunteered close to 1000 hours at the Aquarium of the Pacific for the Voluntary Public Service program area. Through my volunteer positions, I promoted conservation efforts such as recycling and banning gill nets, taught the public about animal and environmental conservation, and assisted in scientific research for Global FinPrint. For Personal Development, I designed an app that helps owners find the perfect pet. Through designing this app, I developed app making skills and marketing skills. For Physical Fitness, I focused on improving my tennis skills, increasing my feet movement, adjusting my form, and improving my hand- eye coordination. I rose from the bottom of the team to a singles number one starter. Finally, for my Expedition, I organized a five-day, four-night trip to the North Shore in Oahu, Hawaii. I planned and executed this camping Expedition completely independently. On this trip, I studied local flora and fauna and collected the pH values of local bodies of water.

---

**Eric Park**

*Rancho Palos Verdes, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

For Voluntary Public Service, I dedicated over 400 hours to improving the world we live in through the organization Global Youth Mission. With this organization, I tutored students to learn new academic concepts in STEM, while also touching on new concepts they never learned before. I have also supported the elderly at Senior Citizen events. For Personal Development, I improved my knowledge and skills in the field of drones to participate in competitions. I enhanced my skills by joining a drone team at my school, reading articles to learn about parts and advancements, and creating my own drones from scratch. For my Physical Fitness goal, I improved my 9-hole golf score from above 50 average to below 40. I improved my skills even further by joining my high school's golf team, practicing with a private coach, and working on putting, chipping, and driving on my own. Finally, for my Exploration I planned a five-night trip to Seoul, South Korea. While in South Korea, I learned to cope with a language barrier and adapt to a new environment. The Congressional Award was an enriching experience that taught me perseverance and selflessness to open myself to foreign areas.

**Seraphine Sun**

*Palos Verdes Estates, California*

*Advisor: Heidi Shulman*

*Affiliations: HOBY, National Honor Society*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed 580 hours of Voluntary Public Service by volunteering at the various philanthropies within National Charity League (NCL). I researched and introduced an animal rescue philanthropy to NCL, and spent countless hours helping pets get adopted. For Personal Development, I improved my harp skills by performing in an orchestra and at private and charitable events. I donated all the proceeds from my performances to the animal rescue philanthropy. For Physical Fitness, I continued my training in the equestrian dressage discipline. I later attained my goals of earning Overall Championship and becoming captain of my school's varsity equestrian team. As for the Exploration program area, I planned a five-night trip to Costa Rica and a ten-night trip to Thailand (Koh Samui and Bangkok) and compared the different ecosystems, cultures and languages. I also tried ziplining, ATV-riding, jet-skiing and snorkeling for the first time. The Congressional Award taught me to set well-defined goals, and to achieve those goals through perseverance, focus and organization.

---

**Daniel Yi**

*Torrance, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I committed myself to tutoring and mentoring children that were in need. In order to do this, I have gone to the local public library and helped many children with their homework. I have also taught children new skills about different subjects in school. For my Personal Development, I improved my art skills by listening to my independent teacher and practicing new artistic techniques with him. Additionally, I have also practiced skills on my own five times a week in order to get even better at my craft. In order to complete my Physical Fitness goals, I have gone to the boxing gym two or more times a week to expand my skillset. I have trained with my coaches and done many different drills and exercises to get better. I have also improved my stamina by joining the school track and cross-country teams. For my Exploration, I spent a lot of time planning the activities for my trip to New York. I talked to many people who have visited New York in the past and got words of advice about what to expect. I also completed significant research in order to get the best experience possible. I have learned how to work hard to achieve the goals I set and learned to be more open minded when it comes to new activities and meeting new people.

**Brian Yoon**

*Beverly Hills, California*  
*Advisor: Sue Byun*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at a local tennis court to assist tennis instructors and guide beginner techniques. I also led warm up exercises and cleaned the courts. For Personal Development, I continued to lead my Boy Scout Troop as the Senior Patrol Leader during weekly Monday meetings, camping trips, and special outings. Leading my troop during these activities requires constant communication and forward planning. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my tennis skills, so I watched online lessons on how to improve my serves and completed specific drills with a private coach that allowed my double faults per match to decrease. To complete my Exploration, I traveled to multiple places in Manhattan for five days and four nights. I explored the financial district and saw the New York Stock Exchange building. I had the opportunity to see the diverse cultures of the city just by walking through the streets. My journey to complete the Congressional Award has been lifechanging because it has challenged me to consistently improve myself as a member of my community.

---

**Ye-Eun Han**

*Los Angeles, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I completed various activities through the nonprofit Global Youth Mission. I've learned what love truly is and how to give it to others. My Personal Development goal was to improve my piano skillset. I spent 2 hours daily to achieve my goal. Setting and achieving my Physical Fitness goal has helped me become immensely more active in my daily life through basketball. For my Exploration, I wanted to explore the northeast region of the country as well as the northwest region. I planned a trip to explore Rhode Island and San Francisco. I enjoyed the time spent together with my family and liked planning things out and following the plan. Sometimes, I had to adjust the plan when things didn't go as expected. It was a meaningful time for my family and for myself. I am very thankful that I was able to take part in Congressional Award. It helped me find who I really am and helped me grow as a beautiful and strong woman. I feel that my high school experience was busy because of this program but it was very meaningful because I was trying to achieve my goals that I set for myself. Every time I achieved my goals, I was very happy and motivated to do more.

**Dayeon Hwang**

*Los Angeles, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

With the non-profit organization Global Youth Mission, I've made blankets for cancer patients, tutored young children in a variety of concepts, and attended community events for the less fortunate. Through volunteering, I've cared for peoples' wellbeing and learned to be comfortable around a variety of people. I practiced the flute individually and with an independent teacher for my Personal Development. I also performed with an orchestra outside of school. Over time, I've learned to overcome the monotony of practice and become a skilled musician. To accomplish my Physical Fitness goal I took daily walks, worked out at a local gym, and stretched. Before I started exercising, I could run for about 20 minutes at about 5 mph. Now, I can run for almost an hour straight at a faster speed. For my Expedition, I planned a family trip to Sedona, Arizona, where I studied the environment and culture of an outdoors lifestyle. I researched tourist destinations, bought appropriate hiking equipment, and looked into popular restaurants and cafes. I pushed myself to complete long hikes to stay on schedule. By participating in the Congressional Award, I've learned more about the value of setting goals, the ability to step outside of my comfort zone, and dedication. These are all skills that have helped me develop my new, positive mindset.

---

**Elissa Kim**

*Los Angeles, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

I volunteered through Hwarang Leo Club and at the Alexandria House. Hwarang Leo is a volunteer organization in the Los Angeles area where I volunteered by serving the homeless, helping with garage sales, and providing free medical checkups. Through Alexandria House, I tutored at-risk and underprivileged children in low-income households. To complete my Personal Development goals, I played the piano almost every week. Although I took lessons as a child, I never really grasped a perfect skill in the instrument. I retaught myself piano and learned to play songs by Beethoven and Chopin. To complete my Physical Fitness goal, I ran every weekend. I did not do cross-country or track, so I used most of my free time to run around my neighborhood. When I first began, I felt tired and slow, but soon enough, I caught the hang of it and ran three miles with ease. I traveled to Kauai with my family over the summer for my Expedition. I went on hikes, drove from one tourist location to the next, went snorkeling, and even went on a helicopter ride. This trip helped me broaden my love for nature and explore new places I would have never had the opportunity to see in Los Angeles. On my journey toward earning the Congressional Award, I stepped out of my comfort zone to do activities I would usually overlook in my day to day life. From playing the piano to running a mile, I was able to take my hobbies to new heights and stayed absolutely committed to achieving a goal. I am proud of not only the hours that I have done but by my commitment to these activities and confidence I have gained.

**Grace Kim**

*Los Angeles, California*  
*Advisor: Elisa Sagardia*

I founded a nonprofit volunteer organization called America's VOICE. The members and I utilized our talents to tutor children and perform music at elderly homes. We also volunteered with local organizations for beach cleanups, and distributed meals to the homeless population of LA. For Personal Development, I improved my cello skills through constant practice and perseverance, dedicating around 6 hours a week to music. I utilized several books and online resources to improve my technique, mastering difficult pieces measure by measure to break down intimidating pieces into manageable chunks. I improved my archery skills by practicing for 6 hours per week to complete my Physical Fitness goal. Even when not at the archery range, I consistently worked out my arms to improve my strength and precision. In doing so, my score steadily improved as I reached my goal of averaging approximately 1000 for the indoor tournaments. I went to several areas in Old Town San Diego to explore the history and culture of immigrant families. I visited art galleries, local restaurants, and street performances. Through this trip, I learned more about the Chicano community in California, along with their history, culture, and stories. Through the Congressional Award, I learned about patience, dedication, and perseverance; improving my skills while simultaneously using them to help my community over several years.

---

**Joshua Chung**  
*Cerritos, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*  
*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

Through the non-profit organization Young Ambassadors of Tomorrow, I and my fellow members helped our community through neighborhood clean-ups and regular visits to the local orphanage. From my volunteer experiences, I learned the importance of unity and the power of bringing people together. For my Personal Development, I spent almost every week learning how to play the guitar. In the beginning, it was very difficult on my fingers and hands. However, through the constant practice and determination, I was able to improve drastically and use it to enhance my musical abilities. For Physical Fitness, I was able to successfully increase my three-point shooting percentage on my school's basketball team by about 10 percent. It took a lot of days working on being more consistent, but in the end, it was worth it as it helped my varsity team during games. For my Expedition, I went camping for the first time in Big Bear, California. It was hard at first to get adjusted to doing things on my own and in the campgrounds, but as time went on, I realized the beauty in the nature itself. Through learning from my mistakes, I was able to have a memorable trip at Big Bear. I would like to thank my friends and family for supporting me along this journey and I definitely could not have done it without them.

**Josephine Kim**  
*Cerritos, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

I served mainly with RAY (Resilience Amongst Youth) Club as well as YSPM (Young Scholars Pursuing Mindfulness), both of which I took leadership of. I coordinated fun activities that overcome language and cultural barriers in RAY Club, while increasing awareness of psychological topics for YSPM. For Personal Development, I learned to express my personality through playing music on the piano and used this to develop myself. I practiced during my free time at home, and had piano lessons with a private piano teacher, learning different styles and skills on the piano such as classical, contemporary, and ragtime. To complete the Physical Fitness portion, I have exposed myself to a variety of dance styles such as pom, jazz, hip hop, and contemporary, and added in cardiovascular exercises such as running or strength training three times a week to improve my stamina and technique on the dance floor. I worked on my flexibility and dance skills daily. For my Exploration, I traveled to London, England during winter break of my senior year, and also explored other cities during the week that I spent there. I felt like I was able to bring out the best version of myself through bettering the different aspects of my life.

---

**Chaerin Lee**

*La Mirada, California*  
*Advisor: Jenny Wheatley*

For Voluntary Public Service, I participated in the Global Youth Mission, a nonprofit organization dedicated to various local service projects. Through Global Youth Mission, I organized donated items to be distributed among local communities and supervised parents and children waiting to receive emergency medical attention. To enhance my leadership skills and complete my Personal Development goal, I participated in my school student government for four years, working my way up the Student Body President. I also went to multiple leadership summer programs and conferences. I spent several hours per week in the pool to complete my Physical Fitness goals. I was able to improve my time treading water, hold my breath for a longer time, and swim faster overall. Over the summer of 2017, I completed my Exploration trip by visiting South Korea and Thailand to better understand the history and culture of Asia. I've done so by trying new traditional food, visiting historic places, and taking pictures of the beautiful natural environment.

**Claire Lee**

*Cerritos, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, Key Club, National Honor Society*

I volunteered on a weekly basis to take care of pre-kindergarten children while teaching them class worksheets and activities as a volunteer teacher's aide. In addition, I volunteered at local community events with organizations such as Key Club and the California Scholarship Federation. To complete my Personal Development goals, I developed my communication, research, and public speaking skills by engaging in Model United Nations conferences and local debate tournaments. Each weekday, I trained for approximately 2.5 hours through intensive core, speed, and endurance running workouts to complete my Physical Fitness goals. Additionally, on weekends, I participated in local cross-country races and invitationals. In order to complete my Expedition goal, I organized, coordinated, and planned a trip to develop my independent qualities while being immersed in nature. Activities that were incorporated into this Expedition included camping, hiking, and journaling. My overall experience in earning the Congressional Award was a milestone that I am proud of achieving. It was a challenge that taught me the importance of organizing, planning, and taking small steps to achieve my goal.



---

**Isha Pema**

*Cerritos, California*

*Advisor: Brian Nguyen*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Key Club, National Honor Society*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed Voluntary Public Service at the Boys and Girls Club of Cypress, where I worked with inner-city children. I also volunteered at events like track meets through clubs such as National Honors Society, Key Club, and California Scholarship Federation. For Personal Development, I interned at a domestic violence shelter, where I learned about cultural stigmas surrounding the cycles of abuse. I also took piano lessons weekly and practiced playing daily. For my Physical Fitness, I ran with my high school cross-country and track & field teams. I was able to take training camps at Mammoth Lake and participate in meets in Hawaii and Oregon. Finally, for my Expedition I planned a seven-day trip to Costa Rica. I stayed with a local family in a small town that did not speak any English and learned so much about the Spanish culture. Overall, earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal was an eye-opening experience that allowed me to build my confidence and knowledge of the world I live in.

**Qixiang Xiong**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Sherrie Lah*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered through the nonprofit organization Future Young Leaders of America. Activities included serving an orphanage and an abused women's shelter, as well as helping others in need in my community. For Personal Development, I practiced with a private guitar teacher and learned various guitar styles. For Physical Fitness, I improved my basketball free throw shooting percentages through consistent practice and hard work. For my Exploration, I planned and executed a trip to Hawaii to explore its unique culture and history.

---

**Flora Ahn**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I spent hundreds of hours volunteering with the nonprofit organization Young Leaders of Orange County. This organization brings together high school students from all around our community to provide math and English education to younger students in Orange County. For my Personal Development goal, I served as vice president of this organization in addition to learning and mastering Violin as new instrument. I began learning and mastering tennis for my Physical Fitness goal and was able to immensely improve my skillset through consistent practice on the Sonora high school tennis team. For my Expedition, I planned and executed a trip to Antelope Valley and Canyon where I was fully immersed in nature's beauty.

**Yujin Choe**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

Through the volunteer organization Future Young Leaders of America, I have helped improve the environment of my community and nearby areas by participating in many park and beach cleanups. I have also recycled cans and bottles and participated in garage sales to fundraise for the homeless and for children in developing countries. For my Personal Development, I practiced fine arts and dedicated time each week to developing my skillset. I have also participated in many art competitions to apply the art techniques I have learned. For Physical Fitness, I have learned to play tennis. I started off with knowing nothing about the rules of tennis, and I would always hit the ball out of the court. However, now I am skilled enough to play casually with friends or family. For my Expedition, I organized a camping trip to Yosemite National Park. During the trip, I got to experience hiking, cooking for myself, and providing transportation for myself. I am grateful to the Congressional Award for encouraging and pushing me to learn new skills, explore new places, help new people, and gain new experiences.

---

**Jung-yoon Claire Choi**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Rick Chi*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

I worked with students from Boys and Girls Club and taught them how to play the clarinet for my Voluntary Public Service. Through this activity, I was able to serve my community by providing underprivileged students the opportunity to experience a more personalized learning method. For my Personal Development, I sought to expand my knowledge of computer applications by learning new programming languages. Throughout the course of my learning, I not only honed my hard skills in coding and electrical engineering but also my soft skills in problem solving and communication. My Physical Fitness goal was to run a half-marathon, so I trained every other weekend with my father and my running club and ran a 15k at the Stars and Stripes/Freedom Run in preparation for the half marathon. Last summer, I successfully completed my run at the Biofreeze San Francisco Marathon. For my Exploration, I hoped to learn about another country's culture in depth while also becoming more independent. In order to achieve my goal, I went on a trip through multiple provinces of Eastern Canada, trying many traditional foods and sightseeing at famous attractions. By participating in the Congressional Award, I have grown as a person by becoming more independent and developing my understanding of the world around me. I grew to be more aware of the needs of the youth in my community and became more goal-oriented in personal objectives. Through my Exploration to Eastern Canada, I also learned not only about the culture of another country, but also the unexpected difficulties that can still potentially arise during a planned trip.

**Evelyn Chung**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

For Voluntary Public Service, I mostly spent time volunteering along with my local community service organization, Future Young Leaders of America, where I was able to clean up local parks and beaches in order to give back to the community. I was able to fulfill my Personal Development through playing piano. In addition, I also fulfilled my Personal Development goal while attending Korean school every Saturday; through this time, I was able to improve reading, writing, and speaking skills as well as learn more about Korean culture and history. For Physical Fitness, I engaged in volleyball. Whether it was on the school team or for my club team, I spent a large amount of time practicing for the sake of my health and also to improve my skills as a volleyball player. I was able to complete my Exploration in November 2017 in Korea. Though I've been in the past, this trip was new and eye opening because I visited cities and regions I hadn't been before. This Exploration allowed me to learn more about my family's culture as well as Korea's history. Overall, my experience with the Congressional Award has been very rewarding because I was able to be recognized for my hard work and development into a well-rounded person and member of society.

---

**Wesley Dale**

*Yorba Linda, California*

*Advisor: Ken Hall*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Discovery Bound NLC*

As an involved athlete, I completed most of my Voluntary Public Service supporting various sporting events at my school. I helped run the snack shack at many water polo tournaments as well as coached a youth lacrosse team for 2 years. I read through different Christian Science literature with my advisor to complete my Personal Development goal. We had weekly discussions about our readings which included biographies of Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, and old articles published in Christian Science periodicals. For Physical Fitness, I played lacrosse for all four years in high school. In addition to that, I marched in the band at my school for two years. To complete my Expedition, I planned a national parks road trip for my family in which we visited 3 national parks in 5 days. We drove through Bryce Canyon, Zion, and Death Valley, appreciating and learning about the desert ecosystems of the west.

**Joseph Dong**

*Diamond Bar, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I performed Voluntary Public Service for over 400 hours through the nonprofit organization Global Youth Mission. I tutored children and provided homework support under this organization and taught programming as part of the organization's volunteer trips to Mexico. I also improved my cello-playing skills for Personal Development. I practiced cello under the guidance of a cello teacher outside of school as well as practiced at home independently. For Physical Fitness, I improved my mile running time from eight minutes to under seven minutes. I did so by running at my local neighborhood park. Finally, I planned out a trip to Northern California to study the culture and history of this location. I visited several museums, such as the Intel Museum and the Computer History Museum. Overall, I found my journey in the Congressional Award truly unforgettable.

---

**Jennifer Ho**  
*Fullerton, California*  
*Advisor: Christian Aguirre*

I completed my Voluntary Public Service by serving various non-profit organizations specialized in treating and empowering victims of human trafficking and abusive environments. Additionally, I have led cybersecurity summer and yearlong training courses to students from middle schools and high schools. For Personal Development, I attended music classes weekly, practiced daily, and studied music theory in order to graduate from California's Certificate of Merit State Music Exam with full honors. Since then, I have competed and won multiple music festivals, and am performing at Carnegie Hall this summer. To achieve my Physical Fitness goal, I signed up for a two-year long gym membership at 24 Hour Fitness as well as taken Aerobics, Yoga, and Pilates classes multiple times a week. For my Exploration, I traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where I spent time volunteering at orphanages, saving their endangered sea turtles, and exploring the Malaysian culture. The Congressional Award has influenced me to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to always strive for progress and learning; while doing so, I have helped communities of under privileged women and children.

**Andrew Hong**  
*Fullerton, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 200 hours of Voluntary Public Service through the non-profit organization Future Young Leaders of America. I participated in activities such as park clean-ups and held group discussions about our goals to participate in good deeds on a daily basis. For Personal Development, I bought Korean language books to study for the SAT II subject test. I also took advanced Korean classes at my school to help me become a more fluent speaker. For my Physical Fitness portion, I was determined to increase my rate of consistency in tennis from 65% to 90%. I began by practicing on the weekdays and weekends and gradually added various routines to strengthen my body. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a four-night camping trip exploring the wilderness of Ventura. While camping, I learned valuable lessons on how to set up a tent, start my own fire, and become more organized. By participating in The Congressional Award, I learned to assist my community through work that will benefit people and the environment. This program has enabled me to become more responsible and organized.

---

**AnneClare Kim**

*Brea, California*

*Advisor: Dan Moyer*

As president of Music Hearts, I visited Greenfield Care Center every month to perform piano pieces for the senior residents there and helped organize the other students' performances as well. We also prepared gifts to distribute to the elderly. For Personal Development, I improved my Korean speaking and writing skills with guidance at Ivy Master Academy. I practiced everyday speaking to and texting my parents only in Korean. To achieve my Physical Fitness goal, I practiced kendo at Anaheim Youth Center every week and got up to my 1st degree black belt. I also helped train the younger students and participated in multiple competitions. I went on an Exploration of South Korea and educated myself about my home country. I visited important cultural sites such as the DMZ, 63 Building, Korea University, and the National Museum of Korea. I developed a stronger sense of national pride and respect for my culture. Earning the Congressional Award has given me opportunities to improve myself overall as well as discover my growth potential.

**Erin Kwak**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Albert Lee*

I completed my Voluntary Public Service goals under the guidance of two organizations: Pacific American Volunteer Association and HOPE Global Outreach Foundation. I participated in numerous activities to improve the lives of the less fortunate, children, Korean communities, and help the environment. For Personal Development, I participated in an organization called California Association of Student Councils to learn and apply leadership skills. I attended conferences, worked as a counselor, and created a branch at my school. As for Physical Fitness, I worked to increase my limb poundage from 24 pounds to 32 and improve my shooting outdoors. I did this by doing physical training, practicing outdoors, and focused on improving my form. For Exploration, I planned a trip to England, specifically Henley-on-Thames, London, Canterbury, and Princes Risborough. During my stay, I encountered different foods, people, and lifestyles and visited various museums, observed different types of architecture, and perused local stores. While exploring a different country and numerous aspects of myself, the effort that I put into earning the Gold Medal provided ample opportunities to learn new skills and improve existing ones.

---

**Yohan Kwak**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

In earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I dedicated hundreds of hours to Voluntary Public Service. I helped clean my local parks, clean my local beaches, and prepared care packages for the less fortunate. To complete my Personal Development, I dedicated time to practicing the flute. During this time, I was able to improve my skills immensely and work on playing techniques. For Physical Fitness, I committed hours to practicing my tennis game. During the process, I was able to significantly improve my skills and ability to play the sport. Finally, for my Exploration, I visited the country of South Korea. I was able to learn a lot more about my cultural background. In addition, I was able to grow more as a person because I had to learn how to do everything on my own.

**Ethan Lee**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

I completed my Voluntary Public Service Goals by participating in park cleanups, recycling programs, and helping with garage sales. Once a month, I participated in park cleaning in our local community and collected recyclables to donate money to a city in Africa. I also held a garage sale every six months. I completed my Personal Development goals by getting a tutor for my math and English school subjects. I used those tutors to enhance my English and math abilities by practicing every day. I completed my Personal Development goals by practicing baseball every day. I also had special training to increase my skills as a pitcher and as a hitter. I completed my Expedition goals by planning a camping trip to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park. It took me many days to research and plan the trip. I planned out daily activities and daily meals. My overall experience in earning The Congressional Award was very positive; I have learned many core values in life, and I came to appreciate many little things I took for granted. Now, I have more sympathy for young unfortunate children especially in underserved communities. I learned how to take responsibility, take charge, and gained great leadership skills. Throughout this journey, I have learned so many lifelong skills to help me become a great leader in the future.

---

**Ethan Lee**

*Fullerton, California  
Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at my local non-profit organization through creating a youth mentoring program for foster children in Orange County. I worked on-site to develop the necessary documents such as registration forms and rules and regulations for mentors and foster children. I also provided one-on-one tutoring and mentorship for a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student by giving him insight on potential opportunities and preparing him for future academic success. For Personal Development, I took private violin lessons every week, participated in the Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra, and practiced daily on my own. I won the American Protégé International Spring Competition and will play solo in Carnegie Hall on this June. For the Physical Fitness portion, I love playing basketball, so I participated in the school basketball team last year. I then trained on my own and joined the church basketball team which met weekly. My skills continued to improve, and I reached my goals enabling me to significantly contribute to my church team's winnings during several games. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a five-night experience to learn Mexican culture in Loreto, Baja California. While visiting the country, we went fishing and on hikes, photographed ocean and wildlife, visited a mission, and learned how to cook Mexican food. The Congressional Award was an enriching experience that taught me perseverance and selflessness and enabled me to meet new people and discover my passions.

**Justin Lee**

*Brea, California  
Advisor: Becky Marchant*

For Voluntary Public Service, I was part of service clubs such as the Hwarang Leo Club and Future Leaders of America Club in order to provide help and support for the local community. I did activities such as homeless feedings, beach cleanings, park beautification, etc. For Personal Development, my goal was to become more social throughout my high school career. I have come very far and made many friends and I now love engaging in social activities and hanging out with my friends whenever I have the time to. My Physical Fitness goals were to lose weight, get fit, and get out of the overweight range on the weight scale. I accomplished all of these goals through hard work and I still am engaging in exercises and dieting in my daily life. I've currently lost over 30 pounds through healthy eating and exercise. For my Exploration, I wanted to go to Korea and experience my motherland's culture and traditions. I was able to go and learn a lot from my relatives and go on many road trips to hiking spots, traditional homes, and learn about traditional foods.



---

**Sunghee Lee**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I volunteered in organizations like Future Young Leaders of America, Boys and Girls Club, Heart of Africa, and Sunrise Senior Living. I provided community service in different fields, such as playing music for elderly residents, working for the homeless, and tutoring. For the Personal Development portion, I practiced playing the flute by self-teaching from beginner level. I gradually improved to reach intermediate level through hours of practicing tonguing and abdominal breathing. For Physical Fitness, I increased my technique, flexibility, and creativity through three hours of dancing every week. I trained through warmups and extensive practice of different genres of dance. As for my Exploration, I planned a trip to Seoul, South Korea to learn about the development of their culture and traditions. I was able to explore the different entertainment fields through art exhibitions, plays, and musicals. The Congressional Award allowed me to grow as a compassionate and a strong person. It allowed me to strengthen myself mentally and physically, and I was truly able to provide, learn, and break out of my comfort zone.

**Megan Loh**

*Placentia, California*

*Advisor: Alice Yee*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Girl Scouts of the USA, Lion's Heart, National Honor Society*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service to design hands-on STEM activities and teach under-resourced kids who otherwise wouldn't have had opportunities to appreciate STEM. For Personal Development, I practiced violin with my conductor every other week in addition to studying on my own. I am now a violinist performing at benefit concerts to help children suffering from the effects of natural disasters around the world. For Physical Fitness, I improved my resting heart rate from 87 beats per minute to 77 beats per minutes by dancing to rhythm games five times a week, 30 minutes each day. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five-day trip from the urban parts of Japan to the rural areas to explore and revel in the unique culture and environment. It was my first time relying solely on public transportation to visit Tokyo, Hakone, and Kyoto! Earning the Congressional Award has allowed me to explore my interests and passions. I have become a healthier, more confident, more adventurous, and overall a better version of myself.

---

**Kevin Mok**

*Brea, California*

*Advisor: Dan Moyer*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, United States Army*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I worked with local non-profits and youth programs that focused mainly on community improvement and homeless relief. I mainly cleaned up local parks and beaches and used the recyclables to fund care packages for those who needed them. For Personal Development, I took on leadership roles in both my Boy Scout troop and in the community. I also read books on effective leadership and ways to clearly communicate with other people. To achieve my Physical Fitness goals, every week I would condition myself at the gym or at home so that I can become confident in my physical abilities and self-image. This consistent work also drastically improved my performance at competitive high school tennis, and I was also able to pass the US Army Personal Fitness Test. For my trip to Italy, it took many weeks of planning to be able to complete my goal. I spent hours researching popular locations and points of interest that would fit my schedule and allow me to get the most out of the experience. Earning the Congressional Award was definitely a journey that took a lot of self-motivation and dedication to achieve; through it I was able to find what I am capable of achieving.

**Sena Oten**

*Santa Ana, California*

*Advisor: Hulya Odabasoglu*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, National Honor Society*

I served as an afterschool tutor, precalculus teacher assistant, and my school's Red Cross president in order to complete my Voluntary Public Service goal. To complete my Personal Development goal, I practiced improving my math and English skills in order to achieve a higher SAT score. Through consistent practice and hard work, my score improved from 1280 to 1450 on the SAT. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my mile time. After training for over two years, I cut my mile time in half, going from 16 to 8 minutes. To complete my Exploration goal, I traveled to the San Francisco Bay Area to observe its rich history and culture. I compared and contrasted the differences in the environment of the Bay Area and my hometown, Orange County.

---

**Noah Park**

*Diamond Bar, California*

*Advisor: Kimberly Hong (Carver)*

In pursuit of the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service spread out between Kaiser Permanente and Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Centers. At each hospital, I serviced both visitors and patients in order to improve their medical service experience. For Personal Development, I spent two weeks in Santander, Spain as a study abroad student at the University of Cantabria. I participated in intermediate level Spanish language and culture courses in order to augment my Spanish fluency. In order to satisfy my Physical Fitness requirements, I committed myself to my school's swim team. Every day, I strived to maintain the condition of my body and to achieve even faster times. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five-night road trip from California to Montana and finally to Banff, Canada. It was an exhilarating and liberating experience to travel across the northern United States. The Congressional Award was an enlightening experience that motivated me to become the best version of myself.

**Steven Park**

*Walnut, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

For Voluntary Public Service, I took on the leadership role of president of the nonprofit organization Global Youth Mission. Our main activities included going to Mexico and visiting an orphanage to educate the children and donate items they were in need of. Other events included donating and providing assistance to various underserved communities. For Personal Development, I focused on my participation in Boy Scouts of America. I have been a part of the Boy Scouts of America for nearly 10 years now. I have learned many life skills including camping, cooking, treating wounds etc. Boy scouts has also taught me discipline and many other things that continue to apply to my everyday life. For Physical Fitness, I was a part of my school's swim team. I specialized in the freestyle stroke, so my competitions mainly consisted of that stroke. I would train everyday inside and outside of school to improve my time. For my Exploration, I went to South Korea with my family. I learned a lot about the Korean culture and how different it is compared to America. I visited many museums and historical sites that taught me a lot about the history of South Korea and how it came to be today.

---

**Sung Yun Park**

*La Habra, California*

*Advisor: Myeong Park*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed about 200 hours of Voluntary Public Service at St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, California. I assisted full-time registered nurses with nursing tasks such as discharging, operating call lights from patients, and communicating with patients. For Personal Development, I participated in the 2016 National Theatre on Ice Competition with the Ballyhoo Ice Theatre team. As a team, we arduously practiced weekly for 4 to 5 hours to perform a long and short program. For Physical Fitness, I practiced my technique by taking private figure skating lessons every week. Through this practice, I was able to hone my skills to take U.S. Figure Skating (USFSA) tests for movement in field and freestyle. For my Exploration, I went to Jeju Island in South Korea. I immersed myself in Korean culture by sampling local foods, learning a bit of the language, being immersed in the beautiful environment, and visiting important landmarks.

**Helen Sohn**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Hannah Huh*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

I dedicated over 430 hours of Voluntary Public Service with Boys & Girls Club of Fullerton and the Fullerton Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (FullGRIP). I helped FullGRIP children improve their math skills. With Boys & Girls Club, I taught young students instruments like the violin and piano. My Personal Development revolved around developing artistic abilities for creating my art portfolio. I dedicated hours every weekend to mastering various mediums such as acrylic and charcoal. For Physical Fitness, I tracked my mile-walking speed in my neighborhood park. Over the course of my fitness plan, I shortened my power-walk time from 20 to 15 minutes per mile. For my Exploration, I planned a five-day trip to South Korea, where I learned from a multitude of cultural and familial experiences. Pursuing this Exploration gave me an opportunity to navigate foreign environments while progressing on my quest to define myself and discover my ethnic roots. Through my efforts in participating in the Congressional Award, I have come to greatly value the importance of setting new goals and achieving milestones.

---

**Annette Son**

*Fullerton, California*

*Advisor: Hannah Huh*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

I started playing piano at a young age which has been a huge part of my life. It led to a weekly volunteer opportunity to teach underprivileged children how to play piano as well as tutor them in mathematics. I am grateful for the new friendships made with students and other volunteers. I also focused on piano for my Personal Development – I've played piano for over 10 years and every year I've taken the Certificate of Merit and accomplished up to level 10. I studied musical theory and practiced playing diligently to improve every year. It was a challenge, but I learned about myself and how to set long-term goals in life. For my Physical Fitness activities, going to dance class every week became the new normal. Attending Hart Academy helped me meet incredible dancers and make new friends. During the summer, I joined the swim team at Biola University and developed my health and strength. Regarding my Exploration experience, I toured and hiked Banff National Park with help from my Aunt who lives in Calgary. This will forever be a thrilling and rewarding memory for the rest of my life. Overall, the Congressional Award gave me experiences that I will treasure, and I will be forever thankful for the chances to explore my own personal growth.

**Kenneth Song**

*Walnut, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

For Voluntary Public Service, I dedicated my time to the Los Angeles-based community service organization, Hwarang Leo Club, where I made an impact on my local community by cleaning up my city, volunteering at community events, and raising funds for cataract eye surgeries in developing nations. I devoted my Personal Development efforts to playing the tenor saxophone. Through my involvement in my school's marching band and concert ensembles, and under the tutelage of a private instructor, my skill level improved significantly over a two-year period. Under the instruction of my coach, I dedicated my time to improving my skills at tennis for my Physical Fitness program area. By attending multiple community practices/meets and lessons every week, I was able to improve my skills significantly. For my Exploration, I took a week-long trip to Spain in order to immerse myself in a new culture that I was unfamiliar with. Through interaction with the locals of the various cities that I explored, I was able to maximize my exposure to the cuisine, language, and history of Spain.

---

**Zifeng Xie**  
*Walnut, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*  
*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Key Club, YMCA*

I have dedicated over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service under the guidance of Global Youth Mission, a non-profit organization aiming to improve the lives of the less fortunate. Through Global Youth Mission, we made blankets and toys for the kids at a Mexican orphanage. By helping the kids, we as volunteers aim to make this world a better place. For Personal Development, I focused on honing my photography skills. Photography is my way to capture the amazing moments around me. Once a week, I went to Downtown LA to do photography. I have become an active member of local photography organization Conquer LA. To improve my skills, I joined a photography class and watched tutorial videos on YouTube. For Physical Fitness, I focused on running. Running is what I do daily. Every evening, I go to the gym to work out and train myself to be a better runner, which also helps me get better at soccer. In addition, I've also studied nutrition to maximize my running potential. After training, I control my diet and try to eat right. In the summer of my freshman year, I planned a 7-day Exploration to New York to study the history and culture of this wonderful location. I visited museums, landmarks, and treated myself to famous NYC local food: hot dogs and pizza. I blogged about my trip along the way too. My experience with the Congressional Award has not only made me who I want to be but also encouraged me to become an activist for making my community a better place. Now I'm no longer just a dreamer but an achiever.

**Aaron Yi**  
*Fullerton, California*  
*Advisor: Julia Zhang*

While earning the Gold Medal, I gave back to the community by completing 452 hours of teaching and tutoring children. At my local library, I motivated children of all ages, from young toddlers to other teens, to read and learn. In addition, I spent summers volunteering to teach kids tennis. For Personal Development, I spent 869 hours learning the piano. On this journey, I was able to go all the way to the highest level of the Certificate of Merit. In addition, I competed in and got awards in various competitions. For Physical Fitness, I swam at Biola University for 2 hours twice a week. I was able to work myself up to the pre-senior level, which is a level that prepares swimmers for their high school's varsity swim team. In addition to this, I would often go cycling or work out when I was not swimming. For my Expedition, I planned a 5-day camping trip at Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Park for my family. It was a challenge to organize such a long trip for 4 people so far away from home, but I managed to pull it off with an experience that was both educational and entertaining. The Congressional Award was an amazing catalyst that helped me experience so much in life and showed me how much I can achieve with just passion and perseverance.

---

**Patrick Yu**  
*Brea, California*  
*Advisor: younghee Kim-Park*

I completed my Voluntary Public Service in the Oncology Department of St. Jude Hospital in Fullerton, California, for three hours every Saturday. I am also the president of mobile library club to bring books to Saturday school for elementary school children to promote reading at young age. The club also held book donation drive. For Personal Development, I was the founding member of Mock Trial Team at the high school and assumed the pre-trial attorney role. At the completion of regional level competition, I was chosen as an outstanding pre-trial attorney by the presiding and scoring judges. I also taught speech-and-debate to eight students for ten weeks. For Physical Fitness, I regularly practiced tennis during summer vacation and maintained a healthy diet. I lost weight and have been able to maintain my weight at the desired level. I have joined tennis team at school and participated in practices and games to maintain my Physical Fitness. For my Expedition, I took a backpack trip to the wilderness in Kings Canyon. I set up a tent, cooked food and washed dishes. I did not have access to modern comforts, such as electricity or internet, but that gave the precious opportunity to be completely surrounded by nature and appreciate its beauty and value. The Congressional Award has been a big part of my high school life. At the beginning, I started the Voluntary Public Service activity and Expedition just to fulfill the requirements. After receiving the Bronze Medal, I realized the benefits of these activities. After the realization, I actively sought out more volunteer opportunities to leave positive impacts on my community and planned and executed the Expedition to the parts of the country that I have never been before. I met and talked to many people and that helped me to mature. When I decide what to study in a college and what to have as my career, I will always think about the lessons that I learned from the process of getting the Congressional Award, and choose to do the things that will benefit society as a whole.

**Carmina Inguito**  
*Winchester, California*  
*Advisor: Carol Hernandez*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

In earning my Congressional Award, I dedicated over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service at a summer day camp by facilitating various activities and assisting counselors on excursions as a junior counselor. Plus, I shelved books and helped with the Children's Reading Program within the community. For Personal Development, I learned how to play the piano and took a few lessons every week. After performing at several recitals, I also joined my city's Youth Advisory Council and became a mentor to kids, establishing an inclusive environment while improving my leadership skills in communication. To complete my Physical Fitness portion, I wanted to improve my mile time by training myself to run at a faster pace and gradually increasing the distance every month until I reached nine minutes. Lastly, for my Expedition, I planned a four-night trip across Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, and Yosemite with my family. We backpacked through the hiking trails, explored differences between the parks' ecosystems, and discovered a wide variety of wildlife! This Congressional Award journey enabled me to find my passion in giving back to the community and taught me how to be optimistic in times of setbacks; thus, impacting my life in more ways than I could have imagined because of the initiative that I have taken to not only better myself but also the world around me.

---

**Tiffany Kim**

*Torrance, California*

*Advisor: John Park*

To achieve my Voluntary Public Service goals, I taught guests at the Aquarium of the Pacific about conservation and environmental issues. I also fed animals and took care of their dens. For Personal Development, I played difficult concertos on the cello and expanded my skillset through hard work and consistent practice. To achieve my Physical Fitness goals, I learned how to do a top spin serve in tennis. Through my hard work on the team, I advanced to varsity level tennis at my school as their number one doubles player. For my Exploration, I traveled to New York City to learn about the diverse ecosystems present in the Hamptons.

**Elisa Park**

*Harbor City, California*

*Advisor: Dan Moyer*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at a local preschool. I furthered the young children's education and helped out the teachers. For Personal Development, I dedicated time to my writing. I wrote pieces for the music column of the Boston Hassle and worked on my novel. For the Physical Fitness program area, I worked with an instructor for my flexibility. I also improved my cardiovascular healthy so I can now run more miles without taking as many walking breaks. For my Exploration, I explored prominent areas of Seoul, South Korea by myself. In doing so, I was able to be immersed in the fascinating culture and learn to appreciate the varying lifestyles by visiting temples as well as its famous tourist spots.



---

**Amanda Cai**

*Coto de Caza, California*

*Advisor: Hao Jiang*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Lion's Heart*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service work through Lion's Heart, a national non-profit volunteer organization. I worked as a camp counselor at Special Camp for Special Kids, helped out at the local food bank, and was a volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club. For Personal Development, I took flute lessons and practiced on my own. I ultimately took and passed the Certificate of Merit levels 5 and 6 tests for flute. For my Physical Fitness portion, I took lessons with my Irish Dance teacher and practiced on my own. I've improved both my technique and stamina greatly from when I first began. Finally, for the Exploration, I planned a trip to Munich, Berlin, and Venice. I practiced my German speaking to communicate with locals and visited historical landmarks that broadened my perspectives and taught me more about this fascinating culture.

**Ann Chen**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To accomplish my Voluntary Public Service goal, I volunteered at a local children's science museum to teach new academic concepts to future generations, and aided patients at medical clinics in my area and in Mexico. For Personal Development, I took art classes and studied paintings at museums and from books to learn new painting techniques. Through my studies and hours of painting, I have become a proficient painter. I decided to improve in tennis for my Physical Fitness. The countless matches and practices with friends and coaches have helped me significantly improve my playing strategies, placement, and consistency. Last but not least, I chose to complete my Exploration in Paris, France over six nights. I was able to learn about the culture and overall environment of the city through the breathtaking architecture, museums, music, and cuisine. The Congressional Award has taught me to become more proactive and determined to help communities while also pursuing personal goals.

---

**Jacqueline Huff**  
*Orange, California*  
*Advisor: Karen Fuchs*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

For Voluntary Public Service, I was able to help those who are sight impaired which is important to me. I was also able to mentor disadvantaged elementary school students. I designed and implemented an after-school program which allowed participants to get experiences that they otherwise wouldn't have. My goal is to be an elementary school teacher. While working on the Congressional Award for Personal Development I was able to substitute teach while studying to become a teacher. This was an extremely valuable experience to me. As a member of my high school's cheerleading team, I earned my Physical Fitness hours with the many hours of outside practices and tumbling classes. For my Exploration, I visited parts of the country that I had never been before. I was able to explore my family's heritage as Polish immigrants and farmers in the state of Nebraska. I was able to visit the family farm which was honored with a marker honoring 100 years of farming.

**Priscilla Hui**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Ellen Wong*

As part of my participation in the Congressional Award, I worked as a volunteer at my local food bank, sorting and packaging donated foods for later distribution. I also spent the majority of my summers working at my local community park working with children and helping with office work. For Personal Development, I attended Chinese school weekly to refine my world language skills. I also trained in speech and debate to better my public speaking skills. I believe that public speaking skills are vital in being an effective communicator and are an applicable skill in the real world. For Physical Fitness, I trained with a professional badminton player several times a week outside of school. In addition to badminton, I also participated in my high school's dance program, working on my dance techniques for a couple of hours a week. For my Exploration, I visited Canada, specifically Quebec and Montreal, to examine the differences in culture between the United States and Canada. From the language to food, I was truly able to experience the cultural differences between the neighboring countries. The process of earning the Gold Medal has allowed me to gain leadership experience, has been a testament of my perseverance, and has given me an appreciation for Canadian culture.

---

**Seung Hyun Hwang**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Chan Moon Hwang*

Through the Irvine Volunteer Organization, I undertook a community awareness project that specifically focused on how improper plastic disposal kills marine life to achieve my Voluntary Public Service goals. We planned out and built a whale statue using recycled plastics. This structure was displayed as an exhibition on Huntington Beach. For Personal Development, I practiced violin at least 5 days each week, anywhere between 30 minutes to 2 hours of practice. I studied music theory using the Certificate of Merit level 10 for violin. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I worked out 3 times a week in the gym doing core and leg workouts. I also practiced on my short game and my golf swing 5 times a week both indoors and outdoors. I went to the golf course and practiced at least once a week there. For the Expedition, I got my PADI open water divers license. After renting gear from OC Scuba Center, I went on a scuba diving trip at local diving points in Laguna Beach. I booked the hotels and planned out the dive points as well as the dive plans and itinerary for the Expedition days.

**Andrew Jockelle**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered for ShareTrees to improve the lives of members of the community. I participated in service under Future Young Leaders of America working to recycle and participate in community cleanups. I also worked to process material for my school district for the upcoming school year. For Personal Development, I self-taught myself Adobe design programs through my own research and from freely available resources online. I spent copious amounts of time learning to use other programs such as TinkerCAD and Google Sketchup. I also improved upon my French speaking skills. For Physical Fitness, I ran, jogged, and biked to and from school in addition to biking longer distances after school and consistently exercised on my bike for extended periods of time during the summer in order to build up my stamina and improve my wellbeing. For my Exploration, I traveled to San Francisco, an environment drastically different than the one I'm typically in and immersed myself in a different lifestyle than one I'm currently familiar with. I also spent time there learning more about my heritage and explored the city, gaining a fresh perspective.

---

**Rachel Kang**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at an orphanage at Mexico as well as a rehabilitation center in order to give back to my community through helping others in need. For Personal Development, I taught myself guitar through watching videos and tutorials about how to learn the beginner methods and mastering different techniques. For Physical Fitness, I wanted to reduce the time it took to run a mile. I accomplished this goal by improving my endurance through running and swimming more frequently. My Expedition trip to Hawaii exposed me to the Hawaiian culture and environment through the activities of swimming, hiking, zip lining, visiting various museums, and spending time at the Polynesian Culture Center.

**Renny Kim**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Dan Moyer*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To achieve my Voluntary Public Service goals, I worked at the Orange County Global Medical Center. My duties included helping accompany patients and serving their needs. For Personal Development, I worked tirelessly on refining my skills on the saxophone. I took lessons weekly and practiced a concerto that I will be performing soon. For Physical Fitness, I worked on my basketball shots. I shot free throws so that I can become a better player. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned and executed a trip to Death Valley. It was a meaningful experience as I had done everything independently from start to end.

---

**Sungmin Kim**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered under the direction of Future Young Leaders of America. We spent time picking up trash at the beach and the park and collecting the items for recycling. We also held fundraisers which benefited supporting students who are without food in Malawi, Africa. For my Personal Development, I practiced my clarinet four times per week, learning how to play different pieces for orchestra rehearsal and necessary techniques such as position on embouchures and counting measures. Through all of my hard work, I have become a skilled clarinet player. For my Physical Fitness, I spent three times per week improving the accuracy of my serve from 50% to 75%. I played pick-up matches at the court and used a stretch band to warm up my body before practice. In the end, my serve accuracy increased by over 80%. For my Exploration, I went a 6-day trip to Peru, visiting the capital city Lima and the rural town of Manchay, where I could see the various lifestyles of the local residents. During my trip to Manchay, I visited the local cathedral and the homes of the locals. The Congressional Award is a valuable experience that helped me become more goal-oriented and self-disciplined. Though some tasks were challenging, it was worth devoting my time and effort to it.

**Jeannie Lee**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Nina Song*

To fulfill my Voluntary Public Service goal, I volunteered through a local organization to help out at centers for historically marginalized groups of individuals. I formed connections with diverse people through arts and crafts and realized the impact that art could have on my community. For Personal Development, I learned how to use various software for computer graphics and animation to create different personal projects. I learned how to express myself through different mediums and apply computer graphics to other aspects of my life. To accomplish my Physical Fitness goals, I joined my school's tennis team and practiced outside of school during weekends and summers until I could improve my skills and win ratio. Lastly, for my Exploration, I planned a trip to Phoenix, Arizona and the area surrounding the city to explore and experience different Native American cultures as well as gain a deeper understanding of their history. I was able to expand my perspective on their culture and see how they have evolved throughout history. This has become an unforgettable experience that has helped me develop into a more attentive and organized individual and has shown me the importance of perseverance and curiosity.

---

**Kendra Lee**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Chris Bonneau*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, Youth Service America*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered under the direction of the nonprofit Crops of Love to create packages for the homeless community. I also visited an orphanage and spent time with the children there. To complete my Personal Development goals, I worked on my cello skills with an instructor. I also had to make sure that I practiced cello outside of the scheduled time work on my independent playing skills. To complete my Physical Fitness goal, I scheduled a weekly lesson with my golf swing coach and updated him on what I practiced throughout the week. Then, we would spend a couple of hours together to improve my overall fitness and golf game. For my Exploration, I planned out every aspect of a trip to San Francisco. I had the responsibility of determining what to do each day and I had to think on my feet when something did not go as planned. To complete this trip, I also had to do a lot of research in preparation. My overall experience was a difficult yet memorable experience because I was able to learn and develop into a more well-rounded person.

**Mackenzie Noelle Lo**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Holly Wylie*

To earn hours for Voluntary Public Service, I used my time and talents in leadership and music to work with various non-profits, each dedicated to providing help to those in physical, mental, or spiritual need. For Personal Development, I further honed my skill as a pianist and performer. I joined a Krav Maga self-defense studio to fulfill my Physical Fitness hours, and I am now both physically stronger and fully equipped to defend myself from an attacker. For my Exploration, I traveled to London, England and the surrounding areas where I learned more about English literature and culture through comparison to my experience as an American. Because of my trip, I caught the travel bug and would love to continue exploring new cultures and experiences. When I first began the Congressional Award program, I had no realization of the impact it would have on my life, but now looking back, I am grateful for the enriching experience. This program played a huge role in developing my confidence and leadership through hard work.

---

**Hyerin Noh**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

To fulfill the Voluntary Public Service requirements of the Gold Medal, I volunteered at a local language school where I helped students learn their material. For Personal Development, I practiced violin every day and improved my technique immensely. For Physical Fitness, I ran every day in the neighborhood trail and was able to improve my endurance and speed. For my Exploration, I visited New York City to be immersed in a big city environment and explore American culture and history.

**Hailey Park**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Luz Arellano*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered every Saturday for two years at Livingstone health clinic, helping those with Down Syndrome build upon skills through reading practice and musical therapy. I also helped out at food banks and health fairs in order to support the La Jolla Indian Reservation. For Personal Development in my art skills, I devoted nearly 300 hours to attending art studio classes in order to enhance my painting and drawing. I was able to use various mediums and take the time to brainstorm valuable ideas to make my pieces meaningful. For Physical Fitness, I trained in track & field every day with stretches and runs in order to qualify for the Pacific Coast League. After I finished track & field, I made it my own responsibility to keep in shape by jogging whenever I had the time in order to lower my mile time to below 8 minutes. To complete my Exploration goals, I planned out a 6 day and 6 night trip to Cancun, Mexico for my family. I made sure to take the time to research properly so that our Exploration would not only be exciting, but also be a very involved, educational, cultural experience. My participation in the Congressional Award has allowed me to take on large responsibilities and experience the rewards of achieving very ambitious goals.

---

**Heejae Park**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

Much of my Voluntary Public Service goals were accomplished through my involvement with Global Youth Mission, a non-profit community service organization. In this organization, I participated in monthly service activities and aided in additional events with other organizations. To complete my Personal Development goals with writing, I worked on my writing skills through personal means and through other organizations. I worked on developing my voice and style in writing through practice in both journalism and creative writing. My primary goal with Physical Fitness was to improve the time I spent running the mile. I approached this goal through consistent practice in the hopes of decreasing the time that I spent running a mile, with an initial time of eight minutes and a final result of six and a half minutes. To complete my Exploration goals, I traveled to Korea and Japan in order to explore the culture and key characteristics of those societies. I stayed with family in Korea and explored a number of natural landmarks in Japan in an effort to understand the value behind their cultures.

**Colman Sun**

*Irvine, California*

*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*

For Voluntary Pubic Service, I spent time doing things I enjoy doing but used them to contribute positively to society. I taught underprivileged children how to swim at no cost to them. I built relationships with the children, played games with them, and improved their quality of life. In order to achieve excellence with the trumpet for my Personal Development goal, I worked on basic skills then practiced difficult pieces. After tiring, I studied jazz theory to further improve my improvisation skills. I also rehearsed with my school ensemble to prepare for contests. In order to improve my swimming times for Physical Fitness, I trained 6-8 times a week for 3-4 hours and occasionally lifted weights at the gym. In addition, I participated in over 30 competitions to develop racing mindset and skills. For my Exploration trip, I spent five days and four nights on the East Coast - specifically in New York and New Jersey. I visited important cultural sites of our nation including the 9-11 memorial, the Statue of Liberty, Central Park, and many more. All was done with my own financial and time management.



---

**Yunqi (Colin) Wang**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

For my Voluntary Public Service activities, I participated in weekly charity events, fundraisers, food drives, and various other volunteering events with the Youth Action Team in order to give back to the community. For Personal Development, I improved my video editing skills by building a YouTube channel. My goal was to create interesting stories and high-quality content. To achieve my Physical Fitness goals, I practiced running and participated in cross-country meets every week in order to improve my running speed and stamina. For my Exploration, I took a trip to China to completely immerse myself in the history and culture of the country and to better communicate with the people. I feel that in my journey of earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I've grown immensely as a person and learned more about how the world around me really works.

**Jiahui Wang**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Sherrie Lah*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at an orphanage and collected water bottles for donation to help those in need. To achieve my Personal Development goals, I spent countless hours playing the piano and improving my technical skills. For the Physical Fitness program area, I played basketball throughout high school and improved my game immensely through consistent hard work and practice. For my Exploration, I organized a trip to Beidaihe, China where I was immersed in a completely new culture.

---

**Johnny Wang**  
*San Jose, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

For Voluntary Public Service, I started a computer science competition at my local high school to promote STEM-related activities to nearby traditionally underrepresented communities. In its third year of operation, the competition was able to reach more than 70 students from 5 schools throughout Northern California. For Personal Development, I improved my skills in Computer Science throughout the past four years. I honed both fundamental computing skills and cybersecurity skills through both self-studying and interning. As a milestone of my accomplishment, I was able to obtain employment at a large Internet company in the Bay Area. For Physical Fitness, I disciplined myself to speed-walk every day during my commute to school and on the school tracks. I also went to the gym to run on the treadmill during the last year of my Congressional Award journey. For my Exploration, I visited China to explore my own heritage and to learn more about Chinese culture. I visited museums and historic places such as HuTongs in Beijing over a 7-day trip. Additionally, I planned the trip myself to learn how to live independently. The Congressional Award has helped motivate me to focus on areas that were previously undervalued and to become an overall healthier person.

**Na Won Yoon**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To earn the Gold Medal, I committed over 400 hours to the nonprofit organization, Global Youth Mission. With Global Youth Mission, I traveled to Mexico and volunteered at orphanage and medical clinics, made packages and distributed them to homeless people, and made blankets for cancer patients. For Personal Development, I improved my singing skills in preparation to compete in competitions and sing with a choir. To improve my singing skills, I worked with a private coach, joined an a cappella group, and practiced independently on a daily basis. For Physical Fitness, I reduced my one mile running time from 11 minutes to 8 minutes. To reach my goal, I ran once per week, stretched, and completed several cardiovascular endurance exercises. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to Canada where I explored nature, history, and culture. I visited Niagara Falls in Ontario, Canada, to observe the awe-inspiring nature of other countries. I wanted to explore something new that I cannot experience in southern California. Through volunteering and experiencing new aspects of the world, I learned how important it is to make connections with different people and to support the community.

---

**Lin Yue Zhang**  
*Irvine, California*  
*Advisor: Daniel Moyer*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

My family has always taught me to show love to the community and be kind to all. By doing a variety of Voluntary Public Service such as going to a family homeless shelter, playing games and interacting with underprivileged youth, I learned how satisfying it is when people that I helped smiled to me. For Personal Development, I focused on improving my leadership skills. By studying leadership skills through watching leadership videos and taking classes, I found that leaders hold a huge responsibility, and they must be confident and be ready to face different situations. For Physical Fitness, I explored my passion for dance. My passion for dancing for the past two years has helped me reach a higher technical level and created more possibilities for me in the future. The Congressional Award motivated me to break out of my comfort zone and make the plan for exploring Big Bear Lake in California for my Expedition. The lessons that I gained through this experience taught me how to live independently. I am grateful that my actions can make a difference to make the world a better place. I will use my strength to keep pursuing my passions.

**Sky Jung**  
*Buena Park, California*  
*Advisor: Dan Moyer*

In order to complete my Voluntary Public Service, I assisted the local community through Future Young Leaders of America and Sharetrees, two organizations where I held administrative duties and participated in various community events. In order to complete the Personal Development requirement, I dedicated several hours every week to drawing and painting, with a heavy focus on developing my technical skills. In order to complete the Physical Fitness requirement, I participated in an orienteering club several times a week, practicing my navigational skills and improving my distance running. For my Expedition, I spent 6 days on Santa Catalina Island fishing, hiking, and sightseeing. I provided for myself during this time and managed my resources carefully.

---

**Brian Park**  
*Cypress, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at the non-profit organization Global Youth Mission. Through my work with Global Youth Mission, I committed myself to the community by making blankets for cancer patients, writing letters to soldiers, and participating in frequent trips to help out at an orphanage in Mexico. For my Personal Development, I chose to improve my violin skills by practicing whenever and wherever I could, even if it was just for twenty to thirty minutes. Practicing the violin allowed me to understand the importance of individual effort. In order to improve my Physical Fitness, I chose to take tennis lessons at a nearby court. The experiences I had in the classes and various competitions helped me focus on my health and abstain from a sedentary lifestyle. For my Expedition goal, I chose to plan and take a trip to the Grand Canyon and Lake Tahoe. I viewed this trip as an opportunity to explore states outside of California using my own ability as well as study the rich history of the area. It was a challenging yet awarding adventure that I will be forever thankful for.

**Loyalty Traster-Lee**  
*Long Beach, California*  
*Advisor: Chardy Lang*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed more than 300 hours of Voluntary Service, first with my local Leo Club, and, later, as a Lion. I helped out as needed at various Orange County events and volunteered weekly at my local Bay Shore Library, where I catalogued books and did basic clerical work. For Personal Development, I successfully curated TEDxYouth@AlamitosBay, an event designed to stimulate conversation within my community. With my team of high schoolers, we hosted an audience of more than 100+ people. To maintain a Gold Medal level in Physical Fitness and start each day on a positive note, I integrated four miles of ‘purposeful brisk walking’ into my routine each morning. Finally, I planned a four-day Expedition to Northern Ireland with a friend. We hiked, explored the city of Belfast, and embraced an independent lifestyle. Completing all the levels of the Congressional Award was a brilliant experience that taught me tenacity and empathy, while inspiring and encouraging me to chase my passions.

---

**David Yi**

*Cypress, California*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I worked through a non-profit humanitarian organization focused on providing rehabilitation support and supplying donations for impoverished citizens within Tijuana. To complete my Personal Development goals, I focused on constantly training myself to reach a higher vertical and be able to dunk the basketball. I did this through not only having extreme plyometric training schedules on my own time but also ensuring that I was well-educated on vertical training. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I participated in numerous sports such as basketball and track and field. In addition, I dedicated myself to running five times a week outside of school to stay in shape. For my Exploration, I travelled to South Korea where I dedicated time to studying the culture of my origin, from the cuisine to the fine arts. I learned so much about my country and was able to create an extensive report of the entire process. I am extremely excited to be receiving the Congressional Award Gold Medal, and believe this was an amazing experience that bettered me as a community-builder and future leader of our generation.

**Julia Dillenbeck**

*Huntington Beach, California*

*Advisor: Chardy Lang*

To earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service serving in my community. Helping out and serving food at community events gave me the opportunity to serve others. For Personal Development, I assisted at a camp, helping take care of children. During this time, I learned to interact with different personalities and strengthened my leadership skills. While on a swim team, I worked toward improving my breaststroke time for my Physical Fitness portion. This allowed me to grow in perseverance and gain mental and physical strength. For my Exploration, I planned a five-night trip to Washington D.C. where I enjoyed visiting the National Mall, Arlington National Cemetery and Mount Vernon. The Congressional Award allowed for positive growth and new experiences in my life.

---

**Claire Fernandez**  
*Carlsbad, California*  
*Advisor: Karen Lonsway*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at Next Step Service Dogs to help train dogs for veterans and first responders with PTSD or TBI. I trained dogs, fostered dogs, and puppy-sat. I've also been the Community Service Leader three years for the Olivenhain Valley 4-H Club and have planned events for my whole club. For Personal Development, I took guitar and voice lessons to increase my musical ability. Additionally, to improve my knowledge of sheep, I raised market lambs and bred sheep for fair where I showed them. Lastly, to work on my leadership skills, I served and was a member of my local 4-H club where I was Vice President and President. For Physical Fitness, I joined a volleyball team and practiced and played with them for six months – we took 3<sup>rd</sup> place at our tournament. I also take English and Western riding lessons and compete in both English and Western pleasure events. For my Exploration, I planned a two week trip to Japan with my parents. During this trip we explored several cities in Japan, saw many historical landmarks, and tried new food. I learned a lot about Asian culture, and it was a trip I won't forget. Earning the Congressional Award was a lot of hard work, but I learned a ton and it was worth it.

**Ethan Posard**  
*Encinitas, California*  
*Advisor: Dr. Laura de Ghetaldi*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of community service under the direction of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Chapters and community partners to promote public health and disease prevention. I was selected as a speaker at the AAP FL Conference and Immunization Summit. Science communication through art was my Personal Development activity. I learned to surf for the Physical Fitness program area. My Exploration was a cultural immersion trip sponsored by the Seminole Nation Tribal Health Department to tour Central and Southern Florida speaking to Native children about disease prevention, literacy, healthy eating habits, and drinking water instead of sugary drinks. By participating in the Congressional Award, I gained communication skills, personal confidence, and empowerment through hard work, goal setting, and helping others.

---

**Margaret Sugarman**  
*Encinitas, California*  
*Advisor: Nancy Gray*  
*Affiliations: Discovery Bound NLC*

For Voluntary Public Service, I created a program called “The Honeybee Road Show” which teaches children about the vital role honeybees play in our world. I recognized that children in my community were disconnected from animals & agriculture, so I organized and led tours and events at my farm. I also volunteered at a horse rescue. For my Personal Development, I worked to become a better public speaker by competing in speech competitions across my state. Fashion design and sewing became a huge passion for me after learning to sew in 4-H Club and winning California State Fashion Revue with my designs. For Physical Fitness, I trained with my horse and competed in equestrian sport, Three Day Eventing, all over California. Over the years, we improved as a team and climbed through the levels of eventing. This summer, we have qualified for a championship show in Montana and we are training hard to be ready. For my Expedition, I traveled to the east coast where I hiked a section of the Appalachian trail in Virginia and went white water rafting in the Carolinas. The scenery was gorgeous, and I really fell in love with the southeast. I am so grateful that I participated in the Congressional Award because by setting goals in the four program areas, it encouraged me to become a well-rounded person and develop a unique variety of diverse skills and interests.

**Peter Ze**  
*San Clemente, California*  
*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

During the process of achieving my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I helped in many public well-fare programs to complete my Voluntary Public Service. One of the most memorable service activities I did was serving a soup kitchen that provided free food for local homeless people. Not only did I help local homeless people, I also learned practical skills like frying an egg. As an international student that first came to America during my middle school years, I focused on improving my English communication skills for Personal Development. In my free time, I concentrated on doing English composition problems and listening to podcasts about English communication. For Physical Fitness, I focused on improving my tennis skills. In completing these goals, I practiced at least once a month with my peers in school. In my free time, I also joined tennis clubs and took lessons outside of school to improve my skills in serving and backhand. For my Expedition goals, I went to China for over a week and learned many historical and interesting facts about this ancient civilization. I visited museums and walked down the ancient streets in Southern China. I also visited the temples and the great mountains in Tibet.

---

**Evan Morgan**  
*Poway, California*  
*Advisor: Roger Dohm*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

Serving the homeless to ensure basic needs were met was by far the most impactful part of my Voluntary Public Service work. From creating hundreds of sack lunches to building homes in Mexico, I not only gained new perspectives on basic needs, I also had a hand in supporting self-sufficiency. For my Personal Development, I focused on my participation as a camp counselor through Boy Scouts. Serving for three years as a National Youth Leadership camp counselor within the Boy Scouts of America organization taught me to be a servant leader; an ideology that emphasizes the group over individual interests. For my Physical Fitness goal, I received a Kukkiwon black belt in taekwondo. For my Exploration I took a trip to New York City – urban exploration is epic in New York City. From Washington Heights to the southern tip, I found monuments, statues and museums that only expanded my love of art. Perhaps my favorite destination was Langston Hughes’ residence, which brought to life his poem, “I, Too”! The experiences I had while working toward the Congressional Award Gold Medal brought me to neighborhoods and people that would be foreign to me. Going through this program has been deeply impactful and meaningful.

**Anthony O’Leary**  
*San Diego, California*  
*Advisor: Sabrina Goosby*  
*Affiliations: American Red Cross, National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I worked with Voices for Children, who provide Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA’s) for foster youth. I gave speeches at fundraising events and served on a panel to recruit new CASA’s. CASA’s give a voice to foster youth in an overburdened system. For Personal Development, I represented the youth in my district on the San Diego Youth Commission, appointed by the Mayor of San Diego. I also recorded my original music in a local studio. Additionally, I started my own organization to help foster youth. For Physical Fitness, I worked out to improve my overall fitness. Then, I participated in three high school sports: football, basketball and baseball. In football, I had never played before, so I worked hard to make the varsity team and we made it to the semifinals of the California State Championships. For my Expedition, having never been in snow before, I went on a snowboarding trip to Utah. I also went on my first camping trip; a four-day campout at a nearby lake. I tried new adventures including kayaking, mountain hiking, snorkeling, and visited historical sites in California. I had new experiences that I never would have had, and I have personally developed skills that will help me in college and in my future career, thus I am thankful to the Congressional Award Program.



---

**Bahara Amiri**  
*Denver, Colorado*  
*Advisor: Heather Chol*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at Denver International Airport by staying in one of the information booths and answering passengers' questions about the airport. I also tutored elementary school students on their math assignments. For Personal Development, I applied to the travel retailer Paradies Lagardere for a part-time job at Denver International Airport. My duties were to take care of the customers, clean the store, and work as a cashier. For Physical Fitness, I joined volleyball, basketball, and soccer varsity teams in my school. I attended after-school practices for 2 hours each day, five days a week, and played in all of the games. For my Expedition, I planned a camping trip to Yellowstone National Park for 4 nights. During our camping trip, we visited Yellowstone River, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, Grand Prismatic Spring and many more. I also experienced an unexpected rain, but overall it was a very fun trip. Ever since I started participating in The Congressional Award program, I've experienced a whole new life through working and volunteering, improving my communication skills, and learning to always follow my dreams.

**Nour Abouyoussef**  
*Centennial, Colorado*  
*Advisor: Osman Demir*

To achieve my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered in my local library to help my community. I shelved books and other media and registered library patrons in a summer reading program for children of all ages. I also helped in my school by tutoring middle school students. For my Personal Development, I wanted to expand my horizons and learn about various topics. I took part in many clubs and teams in school. I was in Apocalypse club for the first half of my 9th grade, Korean club for the second half, along with the Math Olympiad for 10th and 11th grade. I also was part of the Robotics club for 3 years, starting from 10th grade to 12th grade. Ever since ninth grade, I was part of two sports: Tae Kwon Do and swimming, which I used to complete my Physical Fitness goals. In Tae Kwon Do, I learned Korean martial arts, and I am now a first-degree black belt. In swimming, I learned and mastered all the skills that are part of swimming competitively. For my Expedition, I went to two trips; one about hunting, and the other about art and local marine activities. I travelled to Granby, Colorado to learn how to hunt using a firearm. In Laguna Beach, California and Newport Beach, California, I visited the local art festivals, went fishing, and explored the marine life. In earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I learned how to organize my activities, and for that I am grateful.

---

**Adam Mohmand**

*Aurora, Colorado*

*Advisor: Serkan Danisman*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, United States Air Force, United States Marine Corps*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I signed up for every single volunteering event I saw throughout the years and learned that I truly get a thrill out of volunteering because I find it to be fun and I know I'm helping people in my community. For my Personal Development, I focused on my participation in the Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Signing up for drill team, color guard, and senior staff had no bearing on my class performance, but it developed me as a leader. It was definitely worth waking up at 5:00 AM every day and getting to school at 6:15 AM for these voluntary opportunities. In completing my Physical Fitness goals, I found that exercising was something I really enjoyed. I took up Taekwondo and got in really good shape. I then continued to take classes at the gym and strengthen myself. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to the United Kingdom. It was an absolutely magical place. I believe everyone needs to go at least once in their life. The Congressional Award definitely makes me feel recognized for all the hard work I put in over the years and motivated me to become the person I am today.

**Madison Henry**

*South Glastonbury, Connecticut*

*Advisor: Clay Miles*

My Voluntary Public Service goals were to help young kids learn about their community through sailing in Jamestown, Rhode Island and marine life as well as help citizens in the town of Tobatí in Paraguay. I also volunteered at a Meals on Wheels service in a town near me. My Personal Development goals included learning techniques in sailing as well as how to create entertaining videos of me and my friends during fun times in our lives. My Physical Fitness goals included improving my basketball skills by staying after practice as well as working on my own during the off season. I also achieved my goal by gaining all flexibility and muscle back after my ACL reconstruction surgery. For my Exploration, I went to a farm in Alburgh, Vermont where I learned how to milk cows and the maple sugaring technique. This lifestyle is very different than mine in Connecticut.

---

**Gabriella Lowe-Owens**  
*Farmington, Connecticut*  
*Advisor: Vera Polacek*  
*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered with Special Olympics, the Jack and Jill of America, Inc., and travelled to Neply, Haiti. I helped organize logistics and escorted the competitors at the Special Olympics, volunteered at shelters and local businesses with Jack and Jill, and helped with construction, tutoring, and laundry in Neply. For my Personal Development, I studied Chinese, explored my artistic abilities in different forms, and improved my public speaking abilities. This proved beneficial when I won the student elections. For Physical Fitness, I participated on a club soccer team and the high school track and field team. I achieved my personal goal for the mile and 100-meter hurdles, and vastly improved upon my soccer defensive abilities. Lastly, I planned a five-night camping trip to the Berkshires. We went on hikes and went through an extensive wilderness survival course that culminated in us becoming certified wilderness first aid responders. Through my work on the Congressional Award, I have become more goal-oriented, and now have a better understanding of the impact an individual can make in their community.

**Emily Bergwall**  
*Darien, Connecticut*  
*Advisor: Kristin White*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I participated as an active member of a local Emergency Medical Services organization in my Town called Darien EMS Post 53. I volunteered several hours a month to serve on an ambulance providing emergency medical assistance in my town in several roles and ultimately as a State certified EMT. For my Personal Development, I attended a 120-hour class to obtain my Connecticut State EMT Certification. This involved classroom time as well as passing several practical and written exams. I also attended monthly training sessions to improve my skills and knowledge as an Emergency Medical Technician. For my Physical Fitness goals, I played year-round soccer on my school varsity team and various club teams. I set goals to improve my strength and speed on the ball and to be a starter and valuable contributor on my teams in several positions. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to France to explore and learn about the French culture in both the city and the countryside. I also explored the gluten free food options in the country to determine how well someone with celiac could manage visiting or living in the country. It was a great experience and helped me to greatly improve my goal-setting and time management skills.

---

**Jack Ferreira**

*Trumbull, Connecticut*

*Advisor: Debbie Noack*

For my Voluntary Public Service, which is the work I am most proud of within my Congressional Award journey, I worked with an inner-city theatre group doing cabaret shows. I made life-long friends and gained real-life experiences of working in the theatre. For my Personal Development, I focused on my theatre skills as well. I was able to move up from an usher to performing as an award-nominated lead character on stage. It was a four-year journey that led me to declare my major in college and begin a career on Broadway. Also in college, I started to focus on becoming more physically fit and walk off what was almost my 'freshman 15'. To achieve my Physical Fitness goal, I implemented a walking/exercise routine into my lifestyle. It was important for me to be healthy. The Exploration program area allowed me to travel to Illinois to research some of the most famous museums in the United States. The research I did and firsthand experience there allowed me to begin developing an app for the world-famous Barnum Museum. It was a dream come true to earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal. I am so proud of this honor and have found a great sense of accomplishment from being a Gold Medalist.

**Jake McGillion-Moore**

*Westport, Connecticut*

*Advisor: Kathy Lupoli*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

My Voluntary Public Service focused on supporting those in my local community. I was able to use organizations in my school, Boy Scout troop, and church and concentrated my efforts on a small number of worthy organizations including tutoring at a local school for underprivileged children and serving at a nearby food pantry. I used Personal Development as an opportunity to expand on areas I am passionate about - fencing, neuroscience, and music. I became a nationally rated referee, performed at local and regional music events, and had the opportunity to work on a neurological research project. I structured my Physical Fitness through many hours of training and competing as a fencer. I also added conditioning and additional instruction which allowed me to show huge improvements in my performance as an athlete. I had the unique opportunity to explore the city of Vienna, Austria. My Exploration included experiencing local food, music, architecture, and learning about the history of the city. The highlight was attending a ballet performance at the internationally renowned Vienna Opera House. The Congressional Award provided a structure and motivation for me to get involved with my local community and also to challenge myself to learn new things and to participate in many once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

---

**James Munroe**

*Weatogue, Connecticut*

*Advisor: Richard Ryan*

*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the FIDELCO Guide Dog Foundation and the Pelican Eagle Tutoring Project. At FIDELCO, I helped socialize and train German Shepherd puppies as seeing eye dogs for blind veterans. For my Personal Development, I took up gardening, dog training, and photography. For my Physical Fitness goal, I became competitive with powerlifting. My goal was to bench 225 pounds and deadlift 365 pounds. I achieved this through specific diet and programming. Additionally, I wanted to run a mile under eight minutes which I achieved. For my Expedition, I went to Vancouver, Canada, and went on extensive hikes, bike rides, and runs. In addition, I experienced much of the culture, history, and artifacts that Vancouver has to offer. I even hiked the infamous Grouse Grind, which is a rigorous two-mile steep mountain climb. The Congressional Award was an immensely enriching experience that pushed me to step out of my comfort zone to personally benefit myself and my community for the greater good.

**Lee Clyne**

*Washington, District of Columbia*

*Advisor: Amanda Choutka*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, HOBY, National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered over 150 hours in The George Washington University Hospital and contributed over 500 hours to campus community-building by leading organizations and programming for the benefit of marginalized students and communities throughout my high school and college experiences. For my Personal Development, I worked over 600 hours in several part-time jobs. I dedicated over 400 hours to political activism through congressional internships by serving constituents, individual organizing, and within The Human Rights Campaign lobbying, canvassing, and organizing for progressive legislation and candidates. I contributed to environmental sustainability as well as my Physical Fitness goals by switching to walking and biking as a main source of transportation in commuting to work and school. I committed to a routine of consistent swimming in college, increasing my goals to improve my health. For my Exploration, I traveled from DC to Baltimore and New York City for five days, visiting a culturally historic site, The Stonewall Inn in New York City, and gaining skills and confidence in organizing independent travel. Through my activities I've developed confidence and interpersonal skills that will be essential to my future as a medical provider. I've had the chance to serve my communities through my time spent volunteering, and I have gained from those experiences opportunities to meet people and do fulfilling work as well as valuable skills in goal-setting and patience; these skills will serve me well in the long academic path ahead of me.

---

**Lauren Eavenson**

*St Augustine, Florida*

*Advisor: Janet Koehler*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I helped raise awareness about local environmental issues and contributed research towards conservation efforts surrounding them. I worked with my local research reserve on research projects and organized public outreach programs. For my Personal Development, I became a certified catechist in my diocese and taught as a head catechist in an advanced religious education class. I prepared for this role by attending lectures, serving as an assistant catechist, and volunteering as a sacramental preparation peer minister. In pursuit of my initial Physical Fitness goals, I began swimming year-round and participated in strength building classes. Unable to continue swimming for health reasons, I began physical therapy and Pilates classes to improve my balance and joint control. For my Expedition, I planned a five-day, four-night canoe camping trip for my father and I on the Suwannee River. This was something I had never done before and had an amazing experience. I hope to conduct a similar trip this summer.

**Katherine Gates**

*Callahan, Florida*

*Advisor: Anderson Foote*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

I'm earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I dedicated over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service to 4-H Club. I volunteered as a day camp counselor, taught emergency preparedness classes at state level 4-H events, and participated in many other county and state level service-learning projects. For Personal Development, I spent time as an intern for a dog trainer. I learned basic Dutch marker training techniques, time-management practices, and communication skills when working with clients. For Physical Fitness, I trained for and ran the DONNA half marathon twice. I also trained and competed in horseback riding for AQHA and 4-H horse shows. For my Exploration, I spent almost three weeks in Panajachel, Guatemala learning Spanish at Spanish immersion school and participating in medical clinics. I spent my time in the clinics working in the pharmacy and entertaining the local children. Participating in the Congressional Award program has encouraged me to pursue excellency in my everyday life and to not settle for anything less.

---

**Ruhika Lankalapalli**

*Sanford, Florida*

*Advisor: Leah Gentry*

*Affiliations: 4-H, Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I worked with my robotics team to teach kids about STEM in my area. In addition, I put together and sent Spark Science kits to underprivileged kids around the world. For Personal Development, I played violin in a youth Indian American orchestra that performed in cultural events in the community. For my Physical Fitness activity, I served as co-captain of my varsity tennis team and played in local tournaments around central Florida. Finally, for my Exploration, I took a trip to learn about our country's government in Washington DC. I loved seeing the museums and experiencing some of the great cultural events in the area, and I am grateful to the Congressional Award program as it has had a positive impact on my life.

**Sierra Tagman**

*Orlando, Florida*

*Advisor: Andrea Balanzategui*

In order to complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I focused on volunteering at my local Veterans Affairs facility in order to honor and give back to those who have served our country. As music has always been an important influence on me throughout my life, I focused my Personal Development goal on improving my guitar skills. This allowed me to learn a great deal about myself and about music. The majority of my Physical Fitness activities were centered around volleyball, as I have been playing volleyball since fourth grade and wanted to improve my skills and focus on a specific area of physical activity. For my Expedition and Exploration goals, I helped plan a number of my family trips in the past two years and also planned a couple of trips within Denmark while I was an exchange student there. The Congressional Award allowed me to learn more about myself, to become more physically skilled in a sport that I love, to give back to the community, and learn lifelong planning skills.

---

**Mark Lee**

*Vero Beach, Florida*

*Advisor: Lori Humenik*

I garnered most of my Voluntary Public Service hours from summer mission trips to underserved communities. My favorite trip included serving mentally and/or physically disabled people. For my Personal Development activities, I took up acting at my local theater. Being on stage definitely helped me learn to perform under pressure. I did a lot of different activities for my Physical Fitness goal. My favorite activities in this program area were baseball and cross-country. My Expedition was a trip to Canada with my brothers. We went on several hikes in the mountains near Calgary. The Congressional Award program has helped me improve in the areas I was lacking, especially in diligence and accountability.

**Cassandra James**

*Kissimmee, Florida*

*Advisor: Tess Carr*

To earn the Gold Medal, I served as a leader and mentor for my speech and debate club. I built a mentorship program pairing older, more experienced competitors with novices to encourage the next generation of speakers to hone their performance skills and advocate for the causes they care about. For my Personal Development, I focused on becoming a better public speaker by actively competing in speech and debate. After crafting a consistent practice schedule, I was able to sharpen my speaking ability and become a National Champion in Open Interpretation and After Dinner Speaking. For my Physical Fitness portion, I ran two miles a day at a consistent pace. This helped me bring my mile time from 11 minutes to 8 minutes, allowing me to successfully run a 5k race and later hike up an entire mountain in less than an hour. Based on my love of French history, culture, and language, I planned and executed an Exploration to France. On that trip, I learned about historical sites such as Notre Dame, Versailles, and the Louvre, all while practicing the French language and immersing myself in an unfamiliar culture. The Congressional Award helped me discover the power of committing to my passions in a way that was not only personally beneficial but allowed me to make a meaningful impact in my community.



---

**Jessica Bennett**  
*Oldsmar, Florida*  
*Advisor: Judy Brauner*

I performed Voluntary Public Service for causes to improve literacy and STEM knowledge, including First Book, which provides books to kids in need. I taught engineering in my community and provided specialized literacy materials to retired residents. In order to achieve my Personal Development goal of improving my musical ability on the piano, I took weekly piano lessons, practiced at home, and performed in recitals with other students twice a year. For Physical Fitness, I improved my golf ability. I practiced a lot by myself, in group and private lessons, and with my school golf team. I participated in competitions with family and tournaments with the school team. For my Exploration, I traveled to places in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states where I hadn't been before to learn more about the history and environment of that area. While planning this trip, I examined historical locations and places that were indicative of the area's environment and culture. Now that I've participated in the Congressional Award, I've learned a lot about how my actions can make an impact.

**Tanner Smith**  
*New Port Richey, Florida*  
*Advisor: Chris Bornfleth*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed 434 volunteer hours with Toys for Tots to collect, sort and distribute toys to children in need. I also conducted several Cardboard Campouts to raise awareness of the plight of the homeless and to collect hundreds of pounds of canned foods to support those in need. For my Personal Development, I worked with a leadership development group to learn valuable skills such as how to give a proper handshake and table manners. I also focused on resume development and interview skills. All these activities proved successful as I was able to obtain a job after my first interview. For my Physical Fitness, I devoted 880 hours to physical conditioning. The hard work was beneficial as I was able to qualify for the Junior Olympics in all three of my events: shot put, discus and javelin. For my Expedition, I spent six days camping and hiking in the Grand Canyon and Zion National Park. I experienced strenuous hiking at high elevations, observed beautiful plants and wildlife, and experienced geological discovery and immersion in the Native American Culture as I learned about life on reservations. The Congressional Award afforded me the opportunity to grow and explore in ways I never imagined and assisted in my development as a responsible adult while I gained the realization that I can make a difference through volunteering in my community.

---

**Michael LaShon Everhart**

*Clearwater, Florida*

*Advisor: Teresa Freeman*

*Affiliations: YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at KidsZone for special needs children, the YMCA, and for flood victims in Missouri. For Personal Development, I created films for drama therapy for behavior analysts to assist the individuals with meeting their mental health goals. For my Physical Fitness portion, I dedicated myself to training and playing with Nike and Elite amateur basketball teams for the Amateur Athletic Union. This led to me developing myself physically, and honing my basketball skills to secure a position as a starting guard for college. Finally, for my Expedition I planned a six-day, five night trip to Puerto Rico to learn about the culture and territory. Using Spanish I learned while in high school prepared me for my encounters. The Congressional Award was a life-changing experience that taught me what my time and efforts can be worth.

**Alexander Goetschius**

*Palm Beach Gardens, Florida*

*Advisor: Elizabeth Stewart*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

The majority of my Voluntary Public Service was dedicated to serving at The Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse, a Florida historical site that was built in 1860. During my time as a docent, I hosted 45-minute historical tours, monitored the museum and answered visitor questions. I focused my Personal Development on growing my proficiency as a piano player. I am inspired by learning challenging musical pieces in varying genres. My sight reading fluency and improvisational ability have greatly improved to allow me to play any piece of music. For my Physical Fitness goal, I worked to become an impact lacrosse player for my high school, which continues to be an important goal for me. This requires discipline, consistency, agility, and overall strong physicality. My focus in this area helped me to be a more disciplined player with a diversified skill set. My love of U.S. history and history overall easily led me to Boston for my Exploration. From Bunker Hill to the John F. Kennedy Presidential library to the NE Genealogical Society, my exploration was a deep dive into the incredible history of Boston, a city filled with American patriotism and pride. The Congressional Award process has enabled me to set critical goals and to have a purpose in each important aspect of my life. It has helped me to continue to strive for excellence, success, and balance.

---

**Keelie Hanley**  
*Jupiter, Florida*  
*Advisor: Andrew Schaller*  
*Affiliations: Key Club*

I decided that I would log my Voluntary Public Service with the Homeless Coalition of Palm Beach County and I worked with my dad and his catering company to make meals for the homeless. When we delivered the meals, we would always serve them; by doing this I tried to offer my compassion and time through food. My Personal Development goal was to gain more experience, precision in the design and writing style of newspaper articles. I worked to increase my level of expertise in the computer programs, In-design and Photoshop, to master my design. I also researched and practiced writing articles in many different styles. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my skills in volleyball and add strength and precision to my serve. In order to accomplish this I spent many hours a month doing upper body exercises and cardio in order to increase my overall fitness level. By increasing physical strength, I was able to accomplish my goal. My family moved to Pennsylvania from Romania in the early 1900s. I decided to spend my Exploration in places that were significant to my family's cultural background and life experience. This includes the Romanian classroom with the cultural hall of University of Pittsburgh. I spent a week exploring these sites This experience has taught me to be more open-minded and generous with my time; it has also taught me the gratification and pride that can be gained through working hard and serving others.

**Rileigh Hanley**  
*Jupiter, Florida*  
*Advisor: Andrew Schaller*

I spent over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service preparing meals to donate to the Homeless Coalition of the Palm Beaches and I served them to the people who were in need. My goal was to show my compassion through the food that I made with my dad. I spent countless Personal Development hours creating promotional videos and news packages in order to gain a better proficiency in the editing program, premiere pro, as well as news broadcasting in general. My Physical Fitness goal was to gain a fiercer prowess in volleyball. I spent a lot of time doing cardio exercises to increase my reaction time on the court as well as upper body exercises to develop the force behind my spike. My Exploration taught me about my Romania cultural heritage in Pennsylvania by taking the time to visit the places that held significant value for the Romanian community of Christie Park, such as the Romanian Orthodox Catholic Church and the University of Pittsburgh's Romanian classroom.

---

**Royce Howley**  
*Jensen Beach, Florida*  
*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*  
*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service. I fostered dogs from rescue shelters in need of a home until adopted. I also volunteered at Habitat for humanity and other organizations. For my Personal Development I prepped for the ACT exam. I got a 30 on the ACT and hope to increase this score on my next attempt. For my Physical Fitness, I played golf and worked out. I was able to lower my best tournament round to a 68. For my Exploration, I went to Boston, visiting many historic sites and learning about early American history. The Congressional Award was such a great experience that taught me many life skills such as helping others and the community, independence, and organization.

**Maura Null**  
*North Palm Beach, Florida*  
*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*  
*Affiliations: Key Club, National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I completed mission trips both nationally and internationally serving inner-city and poverty stricken communities. I made no-sew blankets for sick children in a local hospital and raised money for local cancer families in financial need. For Personal Development, I participated in local musical theatre productions. I auditioned, rehearsed and learned public speaking skills in addition to collaborating with cast members. For my Physical Fitness, I played for my high school soccer and lacrosse teams developing my endurance, speed and coordination. I was the captain of my lacrosse team senior year. I planned an Expedition to Belize, where I experienced a variety of water sports including learning how to scuba dive. I also immersed myself in their culture by visiting local markets. Participating in the Congressional Award has taught me life lessons that I will never forget but most importantly enabled me to discover my passion and love for serving others.

---

**Harrison O'Donnell**

*Jupiter, Florida*

*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

My Voluntary Public Service goal was to continue working at the Loxahatchee River Center and teaching children more about the environment around them. I also volunteered in many outreach programs including the Blue Blazer Project along with other things such as beach clean ups. For my Personal Development, I charted my weight along with the weights I was able to lift in categories such as bench, squat, and power clean. I did this to see my progress and see what I have been able to accomplish. This chart also kept me on track for what I needed to do better or fix in my workouts. To complete my Physical Fitness goals I spent hours almost everyday either in the weight room or outside on the field at practice to improve my physical health along with my skills as a football player. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to Switzerland for my large family of five and it was quite the challenge. I had to adapt to language barriers and currencies along with finding out exciting new experiences in a part of the world we have not even come close to before.

**A.J. Paksima**

*Palm Beach Gardens, Florida*

*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

*Affiliations: Key Club*

For my Voluntary Public Service activity, I helped make blankets for St. Marys Hospital and wrote cards for the troops overseas. Almost every month, I would go to a local church and distributed food for the homeless. For my Personal Development I started golfing. I loved it and still play twice a week. I also learned the basics of fishing. My main Physical Fitness goal was to be able to play football for high school and becoming better and better at the game every year. The workouts and training during the summer were very tough but I am very happy I was able to keep going and improve my strength and conditioning. My Expedition was to Columbia. It was a memorable trip, mainly because it was a first for me to travel to South America. The vibrant colors of the forests, the birds, the hikes we took and all the photographs I took will last a lifetime in my memory. This amazing experience made me realize that it is important to stay organize and keep a schedule in order to be productive. It was such an enriching experience that taught me to keep going, keep discovering and mainly go out of my box to meet people.

---

**Mariah Perez**

*Palm Beach Gardens, Florida*

*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

The majority of my Voluntary Public Service was spent with a local animal rescue organization. I helped rescue and foster abandoned and abused puppies. For my Personal Development activity, I took piano lessons and learned to play a variety of music genres. I worked toward my black belt in martial arts for my Physical Fitness. My activities included increasing my running speed and endurance. For my Exploration, I planned and executed a trip to St. Petersburg, Florida where I explored the arts and outdoor activities the area.

**Lillian Pinkham**

*Jupiter Inlet Colony, Florida*

*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

*Affiliations: United States Army*

I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service to earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal. I spent many hours creating cards for soldiers overseas, army veterans staying at the VA hospital, as well as critically ill children. For Personal Development, I was able to further my love for photography by spending time photographing friends, family, and other unique aspects of the world around me. For Physical Fitness, I was able to develop my skill in golf. I frequently practiced my short game and long game on my own as well as participated in weekly clinics to learn more about the sport. Finally, for my Expedition/Exporation portion, I planned a five-day, four-night trip to Costa Rica. I was able to visit several cities around Costa Rica, gain a better understanding of the interesting culture as well as viewing many beautiful and unique landmarks. The Congressional Award was an incredible experience which not only enabled me to visit new places, and meet new people but it also allowed me to learn more about myself.

---

**Matthew Powers**

*Stuart, Florida*

*Advisor: Tina Hogle*

In earning my Congressional Award, I completed over 450 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the Florida Oceanographic Center. As a volunteer I educated the visitors about the environment as well as beach and river clean-ups. I also helped to bag and deploy oysters for oyster reef restoration. For my Personal Development I learned to play Piano and performed at my High School's Evening of the Arts. I also was Confirmed in my Catholic faith as I had a strong devotion to better myself through religion. For Physical Fitness I was determined to make Varsity Cross Country and Lacrosse teams. I trained diligently and lowered my mile time and successfully made both teams. I also achieved the State Competition all four years for Cross Country and made a National Lacrosse team. Finally, for my Exploration I organized 5 nights in the Florida Keys education myself about the environment and the animals living in it. I learned about the dolphins and how to keep them safe in the wild as well as what grasses are abundant for the sea life, as well as how our reefs need to be conserved. The unforgettable experience I had earning my award taught me that with hard work and determination I can achieve anything I can set my mind to do.

**Michael Powers**

*Stuart, Florida*

*Advisor: Tina Hogle*

In earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary Public service through the Florida Oceanographic Center. As a volunteer with this program I was able to help bag and deploy oysters in the Indian River Lagoon. I also help to educate visitors about the environment. For my Personal Development I wanted to learn about my faith through Confirmation. After attending Catholic school for ten years there was so much more to learn. For my Physical Fitness I trained for Lacrosse and Cross Country to make the varsity teams. Determined to lower my mile time, my Freshman year I made it to the State competition with the Varsity team and I was also invited to play for a National Lacrosse Team as well as my High School Varsity team. Finally, for my Exploration I organized 5 nights from the Everglades National Park to Marathon Florida where I learned about the wildlife. I also went on a shark tagging trip and spent time at the Turtle Hospital and Dolphin Research Center to learn about the conservation of these wonderful animals. What I learned while earning my Congressional Award was that perseverance and determination allowed me to see that I can achieve success with hard work.

---

**John R. Robinson III**

*Stuart, Florida*

*Advisor: Alexis Fontaine*

*Affiliations: YMCA*

To earn my Gold Medal, I logged over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service coaching basketball with young players at a local YMCA and for the Treasure Coast Basketball League. I began as an assistant coach and later became the head coach working to be supportive, encouraging, and a positive role model. For Personal Development, I learned the mechanics, graphics, and programming necessary to create apps. I am working on several apps and have successfully launched one. For my Physical Fitness, I played varsity basketball for my high school. I spent over 2,000 hours with my team and in my senior year became captain. Lastly, for my Expedition I hiked the Inca trail to Machu Picchu. This trip was a physical challenge, as well as an academic experience, where I lived and learned the history of the Inca civilization. The goals that I have accomplished for my Congressional Award helped me to be a well-rounded student, gain appreciation of proper time management, and realize that anything can be achieved once I put my mind to it.

**Taylor Stevens**

*Palm Beach Gardens, Florida*

*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

*Affiliations: Key Club, National Honor Society*

I have completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service through a variety of service opportunities. A majority of my time was spent leading the Cards of Kindness Committee in which handmade cards are created and sent to the patients of the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital. For Personal Development, I took an ACT classes with a goal of improving my score by 3 points. I also participated in an online workout program to improve cardio levels to benefit my endurance for volleyball. For Physical Fitness, I played volleyball for high school and travel teams. I played at practices, games, and national tournaments. I improved from an intermediate level to an advanced level. For my Exploration, I planned a five-night trip to Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. There I explored the southern cultures and compared the two very historic and traditional cities.



---

**Lindsey Suncine**  
*North Palm Beach, Florida*  
*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at Urban Youth Impact, tutoring at-risk youth in my community in reading and math. I also worked with Blue Water Babes to create a teen fishing tournament raising money for women suffering from breast and ovarian cancer. For Personal Development, I scheduled weekly ACT tutoring sessions during my junior and senior year to increase my score, resulting in my acceptance to the University of Florida. For my Physical Fitness area, I worked to reduce my 5k running time by strength and endurance training and frequent timed runs. I was able to successfully reduce my time by 3 minutes. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five-night trip to San Francisco where I explored historic landmarks throughout the beautiful city and the Big Basin Redwood State Park. This award has taught me that it's my responsibility to give back to my community, to always persevere in every goal I set for myself and that personal development is an exciting life-long journey.

**Lillian Tougas**  
*Fort Pierce, Florida*  
*Advisor: Dana Fahey*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service helping with conservation events. I also worked many times as a citizen Scientist and an educator on how youth can make a difference in the environment. For Personal Development, I worked on my writing and journalism skills. I would write in my journal every night and write pieces for Ocean Geographic as a Youth Field Journalist. For my Physical Fitness portion, I worked on ballet and soccer, making sure to improve and be stronger in each. For my Expedition, I planned 7 night trip to Utah, Wyoming (Yellowstone National Park), Montana, and Idaho. I went camping, hiking, climbing waterfalls, and photographing the most amazing views and wildlife. The Congressional Award was an amazing experience that taught me how to set goals and be independent in achieving them. It also has inspired me to lead a lifetime of travel and expedition, staying physical, and being the best I can be.

---

**Cole Ellis**

*Wellington, Florida*

*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service requirement, I logged over 400 hours as a tutor in STEM-related subjects. I tutored students during my lunch time and after-school in mathematics, ranging from Algebra I to Calculus III. For my Personal Development, I studied to compete in Regional, State, and National competitions in Mathematics, competing in subjects from Number Theory to Probability to Advanced Integral Calculus. I have placed among the top 25 students in the nation in these subjects, working individually and as a team. For my Physical Fitness, I ran Cross-Country and Track, improving my abilities in short races and long distance. Because of Cross Country, I have been able to participate in local 5K's to support good causes. For my Expedition, I planned a five-night trip to explore San Francisco, California; Zion National Park in Utah; and the Grand Canyon. During the hikes I learned how to push myself beyond physical limits along with adjusting to a changing altitude, all while enjoying the scenery. The Congressional Award truly was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that showed me my passions and strengths that all lie outside the classroom.

**Shravya Vasireddy**

*Boynton Beach, Florida*

*Advisor: Leslie Andreula*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 Voluntary Public Service hours at my local hospital. I transported patients around the hospital, worked at the front desk to check in visitors, and did clerical work in the volunteer office itself. For my Personal Development, I took hour-long private flute lessons once a week and practiced for several hours each week. I am now part of the Philharmonic Youth Orchestra of Palm Beach County. To complete my Physical Fitness requirement, I took tennis lessons once a week to improve my skills and increase the accuracy of my shots. Aside from the lessons, I ran at least three times a week and did at-home workouts to strengthen my muscles. For my Exploration, I traveled to New York City for five days. While in New York, I explored several different locations such as Little Italy, Chinatown, and Ellis Island to learn about how different cultures have assimilated into New York. Participating in the Congressional Award has provided me with a new perspective on life and has taught me the value of hard work, altruism, and open mindedness.

---

**Lorraine Angelakos**  
*Coral Springs, Florida*  
*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

With my Voluntary Public Service I made over 400 greeting cards for the military stationed overseas and Veteran hospital patients. I also made dog collars for guide dogs at Southeastern Guide Dogs, and I started my own nonprofit “Lolo’s Cocoa”, hosting events at local children’s hospitals. For Personal Development I participated with Florida Youth Orchestra as a Percussionist, a member of Congressman Ted Deutch’s Youth Cabinet, participated in National History day, with the topic of Missing and Exploited Children with personally interviewing John Walsh, becoming a Florida finalist. For Physical Fitness I continued to grow with mastering Greek Folk dancing from various regions of Greece. I applied to further my skills, winning a scholarship to travel to Greece to learn dances from the area of Thessaloniki. I also did marching band, played varsity soccer & flag football. For Exploration, I decided to travel to Chicago and Indiana. In Indiana, I was able to explore Amish country, experiencing their lifestyle, which was unforgettable. I traveled to Chicago and explored everything that they had to offer, such as their architecture, museums, and famous deep dish pizza. The Congressional Award experience took me out of my comfort zone, expanded my knowledge, strengthened my passions and gave me new passions. More importantly, it propelled me into a lifestyle equipped with leadership skills and goals, all with an excitement of knowing what I can accomplish and how I can truly make a difference in the world.

**Hannah Komroff**  
*Coral Springs, Florida*  
*Advisor: Lynn Lyons*

While working towards my Voluntary Public Service goals, I made blankets for the children at St. Mary’s Hospital, volunteered at Broward Health Coral Springs Hospital, made dog collars for the guide dogs in training at Southeastern Guide Dogs, and volunteered at the Coral Springs Museum of Art Camp. For Personal Development I worked at Broward Hand Center, learning about health related careers. I also worked on improving my skills on the French horn and becoming a better overall musician. I participated in the marching band and soccer for Physical Fitness. I also created a fitness plan for the gym for strength training. I participated in the marching band and soccer for Physical Fitness. I also created a fitness plan for the gym for strength training. For my Exploration I decided to travel all around California, Arizona, and Nevada. I visited the Grand Canyon and flew in a small plane over it, which really pushed me out of my comfort zone. This trip was amazing and I’m so glad I was able to experience everything I did there. Pursuing the Congressional Award Gold Medal has helped me to become a better person and pushed me out of my comfort zone. I am so thankful for the experience and lessons learned.

---

**Christian Petrisko**

*Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

*Advisor: Missy Tougas*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

My Voluntary Public Service was through *No Mangrove = No Man*, a service project that has been running for years. I arranged for an FIU professor to get us started. We harvested, nurtured, and transplanted thousands of red mangrove seedlings along Florida's coastlines. For Personal Development, I wanted to improve my videography skills and make better short documentaries. I participated in the Congressional Award GoPro Challenge and purchased accessories as well as a drone. I devoted many hours to experimenting with lighting, landscapes, and underwater angles, to perfect my techniques. I had good location as a pitcher, but for my Physical Fitness I wanted to increase my velocity. I built up my upper body and went on a rigorous workout routine. I was able to increase my velocity more than 10 mph. For my Expedition I arranged to film Galapagos Sharks, Manta Rays, and Green Sea Turtles in Hawaii for new short documentaries. I also met with Dr. David Karl, the co-discoverer of Prochlorococcus, a tiny organism responsible for a great deal of our oxygen. I felt the years involved with reaching the Gold Medal were very rewarding to me in every aspect of life as I had to push myself more than I ever dreamed possible.

**Derek Petrisko**

*Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

*Advisor: Missy Tougas*

The non-profit I founded with my brothers, Wild Over Wildlife, has a project: "No Mangrove = No Man". This is where I logged my Voluntary Public Service. We harvest thousands of red mangrove seedlings, nurture, and transplant them. Our goal is to restore native habitats which protect communities and animals while absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide. For my Personal Development, I wanted to strengthen my upper body and be able to bench press more than 150 pounds. I also wanted to work on my endurance by running a mile in under 8 minutes. I was able to accomplish both goals through a stringent workout routine. I am a baseball player and wanted to make the High School Junior Varsity team for my Physical Fitness. I trained with private coaches and my brothers to achieve this goal. I made the team as a Freshman and a Sophomore and have also improved my velocity and accuracy as a pitcher. Some of my short documentaries have focused on shark protection and stopping deforestation. I traveled to Costa Rica for my Expedition to investigate illegally obtained shark fins and start a petition to stop their export. I also obtained outstanding footage of rainforests used for another short documentary. I felt a real sense of accomplishment upon completing my Gold Medal. The program really stresses improvement in all areas of life, and I was physically and mentally stronger afterwards. I will never forget the wonderful experiences I enjoyed while on this Gold Medal journey.

---

**Jennifer Carvel**  
*Miami, Florida*  
*Advisor: Jennifer Callahan*

I co-founded Hearts for the Homeless International, an organization aimed at providing free blood pressure screenings as a part of my Voluntary Public Service. As secretary and co-founder, I attended biweekly blood pressure screenings and hosted clothing drives to donate to the homeless community. For Personal Development I practiced meditation and yoga daily to combat stress in my life and improve my physical and mental health. For Physical Fitness I trained for and ran a half-marathon (13.1 miles). For my Expedition I planned a trip and traveled to Oahu, Hawaii where I explored the cultural traditions and natural beauty of Hawaii.

**David Edenfield**  
*Savannah, Georgia*  
*Advisor: Tracy Wood*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I worked at a Georgia state park, Wormsloe, doing general yard work and helping at public events. I also served meals to families who had a relative in ICU at Memorial Hospital, and lead a service project of building shelves for the band at my public high school. For my personal development, I attended the Savannah Engineering Academy at Armstrong State University where I was able to learn about many different fields of engineering. I have also been a part of the Savannah Science Seminar and I took private music lessons on the piano and clarinet. For Physical Fitness, I participated on the track team at school and played soccer in 8th grade and my high school sophomore year. I ran on my own time as well to stay in shape for my school sports. For my Expedition, I hiked on the Appalachian Trail for one week from Amicalola Falls to Neels Gap, sleeping in shelters on the trails and carrying my supplies with me. My overall experience in earning the Congressional Award was very enjoyable because even though it was hard work I was able to have fun and learn about many new skills and interests that I have.

---

**Ridhi Choragudi**  
*Johns Creek, Georgia*  
*Advisor: Angela Marten*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

My Voluntary Public Service was spent at the NICU at Piedmont Atlanta Hospital consistently for many years. As I plan on going into a career in medicine, this volunteer experience helped me learn about my future career and everything it entailed. For my Personal Development I wanted to become a better violinist, working on things such as shifting, tone quality, vibrato, etc. I practiced a couple hours a week along with taking some private classes. I went to the gym multiple times a week to keep up my Physical Fitness. As my schedule and medical reasons didn't allow me to do intense sports as school, going to the gym was my way of staying in shape. I went to Blue Ridge, Georgia for my Expedition. Blue Ridge is home to hundreds of waterfalls and is every adventurer's dream. I learned so much about proper packing for a long day's worth of hiking and exploring. It was a very long journey, making me consistently keep up with my promises to myself for many years.

**Haig Baird Kazazian**  
*Atlanta, Georgia*  
*Advisor: Kevin Wyckoff*  
*Affiliations: YMCA*

For Voluntary Public Service, I instructed children with additional needs in tennis and enrichment activities. I led an outdoor awareness program to preserve natural spaces, conserve the environment, and support people with diverse backgrounds, and serve the community. For Personal Development, I pursued interests in politics, leadership, international affairs, and economics. I interned for a gubernatorial campaign, participated in Model UN, and learned about the protection of human rights through the UNICEF and The Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief. As a member of the Varsity tennis team and tournament payer, I logged my Physical Fitness hours increasing my consistency in hitting forehand/backhand cross courts as well as improving the depth and spin of my ball, allowing more consistency with my shots. For the Expedition component, I planned a 5 day canoeing and camping expedition down the St. Mary's River and Okefenokee Swamp. I paddled 40-60 miles noting differences between plants and wildlife. Earning the Gold Medal has given me the mindset that although I play a small part in a larger world, I am a catalyst for improving lives of others, especially from war-torn and impoverished countries.

---

**Albert Zhang**  
*Marietta, Georgia*  
*Advisor: Juan Acosta*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I coached table tennis at my local club and hosted charity tournaments. For my Personal Development, I increased my experience in journalism through becoming an editor of my school newspaper and learned to write in different genres of creative writing such as poetry, short story, creative nonfiction, and spoken word. For Physical Fitness, I improved my running speed by running under 18 minutes and 30 seconds in the cross country 5k, more than five minutes faster than my time in my first season of running cross country. For my Exploration, I travelled from Atlanta to Lookout Mountain and then to Chattanooga to immerse myself in nature and improve my knowledge of Civil War history. Completing the Congressional Award has increased my development in all areas physical, mental, and academic.

**Justin Lee**  
*Suwanee, Georgia*  
*Advisor: Sunny Kim*

To achieve my Voluntary Public Service goal, I brought books, workbooks, and supplies to a local refugee community and taught underprivileged children basic math, reading, and writing skills. I was able to accomplish my goal by diligently working with fellow volunteers to coordinate lesson plans and bring supplies. My Personal Development goal was to develop my writing skills, so I decided to read a certain number of books of the canon to help my literacy as well as emulate great writers of the past. Also, I tried learning at least 5 new higher-level vocabulary words to improve my lexicon. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my tennis game, so I went outside and practiced my serve to improve net play. I also physically conditioned myself to withstand the sweltering midday heat of tennis courts during the summer seasons. I have been able to win more tournaments and matches ever since. My Expedition goal was to increase my appreciation for nature as well as expand my perspective of the world, especially since I have spent most of my life living in the suburbs. I was able to plan and pack a trip to the Smoky Mountains to hike and bike on the nature trails. Overall, participating in this experience has taught me how to accomplish big dreams by setting small goals along the way and using motivation from my peers to persevere during difficult times.

---

**Manas Mudunuri**

*Cumming, Georgia*

*Advisor: Mrs. Elizabeth Hartley*

400 hours of Voluntary Public Service can be a huge task for most people. However, I was able to complete it through perseverance and dedication. The number of hours I volunteered was not the main concern for me; it was to ensure that I was giving back to my community with my full potential. For my Personal Development I picked up the tabla. I have been able to focus and have been able to master this instrument. Patience and practice helped me succeed in this journey and the hours spent on the tabla was just an additional factor. My passion for golf assisted me through the steps of achieving the Physical Fitness portion of this medal. I viewed this section of the award as more of an interest rather than just playing the sport for the hours. Planning and execution were the keys to having a successful 2 week Expedition to India. Every day is a new experience, and being able to adapt quickly to the culture and society helped execute my plans smoothly. The Congressional Award serves as a key spot in my life because it allowed me to combine all my interests and skills in order to achieve something prestigious.

**Cutler Shiver**

*Watkinsville, Georgia*

*Advisor: Janet Smith*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

My Voluntary Public Service benefited my local community when I worked to alleviate hunger by helping at the Food Bank and serving at a Homeless shelter. I helped the global community by building a Monarch Butterfly Waystation that helps the pollinators stay healthy on their migration to Mexico. For Personal Development, I learned about the world around me by earning Merit Badges concerning nature, animals, birds, land, rivers and the ocean. I learned about underwater life and got scuba certified. For Physical Fitness, I trained to decrease my 5K time and because I did, I was able to win a local race. For my Expedition, I backpacked 75 miles over 10 days at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. I have seen views that were too beautiful to describe. I took away a sense of accomplishment, better physical health, a bond with friends that will last a lifetime, and a new knowledge of my abilities. Because of the Congressional Award, I learned about the needs around me, the generosity of people, the effects of volunteerism, and I've become a better me.



---

**Emily De Wulf**

*Hilo, Hawaii*

*Advisor: Ethan Slusher*

*Affiliations: Discovery Bound NLC, Special Olympics*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I started a nonprofit that provides women with pre-paid cell phones for access to emergency services. I also tutored inmates at the Cumberland County Prison to prepare for the GRE. For my Personal Development, I participated in singing and guitar lessons. For Physical Fitness, I played basketball, soccer and lacrosse. For my Expedition I traveled to France to explore the country by myself. I organized all components of my trip.

**Aila Carr-Chellman**

*Moscow, Idaho*

*Advisor: Steven Daley-Laursen*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, YMCA*

My Voluntary Public Service to earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal included Human Rights International and a trip to Mexico to save baby turtles. For Personal Development, my brothers and I started a rock band and played many gigs around our hometown of Moscow, Idaho. I learned about the music business, honed my skills as a vocalist and learned to play the bass guitar. I logged my Physical Fitness at the North Idaho Athletic Club, and I am happy to have set myself up for a lifetime of healthy active living. For my Exploration I explored Austin, Texas. Being from a small town, it was really important to me to learn about a bigger city and I really enjoyed the culture and music scene in Austin. John F. Kennedy said, "Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction." The Congressional Award has given me a structure for that purpose and direction. It has been an amazing 3 years of my life and has given me so many positive lifelong habits.

---

**Asher Carr-Chellman**

*Moscow, Idaho*

*Advisor: Steven Daley-Laursen*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, YMCA*

My Voluntary Public Service activity included my Eagle Scout project, which benefitted my former community in State College, Pennsylvania. For Personal Development, my brother and sister and I started a rock band and played professionally in Moscow, Idaho. I spent a lot of time learning to play the guitar and how to use a looping pedal to enhance our sound. The YMCA and North Idaho Athletic Club were the center for my Physical Fitness activity. I established a healthy fitness routine and work out regularly now—and plan to for life. For my Expedition I explored New York City. Having spent my life in small college towns, I really wanted to test my big-city skills. My work in service and fitness have built lifelong patterns and habits. My Dad says, “You are what you repeatedly do,” and the Award has really illustrated that for me.

**Jules Carr-Chellman**

*Mosow, Idaho*

*Advisor: Steven Daley-Laursen*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, YMCA*

My Voluntary Public Service area was primarily my Eagle Scout project which beautified a parking lot wall and added plantings in State College, Pennsylvania. For Personal Development, my brother and sister and I started a rock band, The Free Range Children, and played professionally in Moscow, Idaho. I am a bass player, but learned to play drums for the band. I worked out at the YMCA and North Idaho Athletic Club for my Physical Fitness. This experience really established my lifelong habits for fitness. I have lived all my life in small towns so for my Exploration I explored Las Vegas. It was a huge learning experience to be in such a big and exotic city. I have learned and gained so much from the Congressional Award experience.

---

**Kyler Liscinski**  
*Caldwell, Idaho*  
*Advisor: Angie Cox*

In earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I volunteered in the Memory Care division of a local Senior Community, as well as in a third grade classroom. I also volunteered at the Humane Society, caring for dogs in the shelter. I attained my Personal Development goal by continuing my STEM education in programming and robotics, achieving the highest level possible in my program. By establishing a regular work-out routine, consisting of jogging, sprints and distance running, I was prepared for my Physical Fitness goal of running the Sawtooth Relay race for a total of 10.47 miles. My Expedition consisted of a 5-day, 20 mile backpacking trip along the Toxaway Loop through the Sawtooth Mountains. During this Expedition, my uncle and I explored 5 mountain lakes and traversed 4 creek crossings while gaining almost 3,000 miles in elevation. Through my participation in the Congressional Award program I have developed perseverance and determination and have come to see the impact I can have by engaging in my community.

**Quincey Lochard**  
*Meridian, Idaho*  
*Advisor: Teresa Rostron*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I spent time serving at a local nursing home visiting, performing flute, and making handmade cards for the residents. I served at a local dance studio outreach to economically underprivileged children by demonstrating dance movements in jazz and ballet. To complete my Personal Development goal, I worked diligently to improve my flute playing abilities. I mastered each level of the Rubank Method: Flute music lesson books, performing and competing on flute as various opportunities became available. My goal for Physical Fitness was to complete sixteen fouetté turns en demi-pointe on the right and the left foot, separately. I attended several weekly ballet, jazz, pointe, and stretch/strengthening classes. Additionally, I participated in dance performances, and eventually achieved my goal. For my Expedition, I spent a week living on a Spanish-speaking farm in rural Idaho. I enjoyed many challenging and entertaining experiences: milking goats, caring for lambs, caring for cows, irrigating fields, preparing meals, and practicing basic Spanish. What a wonderfully fulfilling opportunity! Although much time, effort, energy and sacrifice were required to complete the goals I set for myself, I am exceedingly grateful for the Congressional Award program and the many ways it has caused me to emerge a better individual and citizen.

---

**Sydney Davis**

*Boise, Idaho*

*Advisor: Teresa Poppen*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed my Voluntary Public Service goals by serving as a peer tutor, working as a basketball volunteer, helping as a counselor/volunteer at a STEM camp, and leading the Spanish Assistance Center. For Personal Development, I learned team building and leadership skills associated with basketball through studying both independently and with my basketball coaches. I also engaged in an independent study in Spanish to improve my language skills and cultural understanding. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I doubled my points per game average in basketball and increased my bench press weight by 45-50%. Finally, for the Expedition/Exploration portion, I traveled to New York City to explore the important landmarks, the art and architecture, and the culture of the city. Because of the Congressional Award, I tried new things, developed new interests and passions, met new people, and achieved my goals; as a result, I became a better member of my school and local community.

**Jasmine Willis**

*Twin Falls, Idaho*

*Advisor: Tracey Meyerhoeffer*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

My Voluntary Public Service hours were focused on helping the community through their little ones. I offered my time to Boy's and Girl's Club, as well as the Boy Scout program as a Wolf's Cub Leader. My Personal Development hours were focused on art. I did a variety of things like learning how to put depth into a painting, crafting a quilt, and wood burning. My Physical Fitness goals were to be leaner and stronger. I did this through weight training, yoga, and fitness training. I traveled to Southern California for my Exploration. The activities I chose were to take me out of my comfort zone, learning how to book flights, hotels, and rental cars. I had to learn to communicate better with others. I got to experience very different ways life from what I am use to. In earning my Award, I learned a great deal about the arts, different places, and working with the community.

---

**Julia Canellis**  
*Orland Park, Illinois*  
*Advisor: Victoria Russell*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society, YMCA*

I completed 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service teaching children sports and crafting skills through my community's youth association programs. I helped children develop athletic and social skills, positive relationships, and connections they can build upon in the future. For Personal Development, I participated on the speech team and in the broadcasting club at my school. I also mentored students on my community's middle school speech team and shared my knowledge and skills to help them compete at the district-wide level. For my Physical Fitness portion, I increased my first serve percentage in Varsity tennis matches to 75%. I practiced accuracy drills, aiming drills, and mental strength exercises to achieve my goal. Finally, for my Exploration I prepared and planned a five-night trip to Athens, Greece where I learned about my Greek heritage. I enjoyed the challenges of navigating through the city, practicing the language, and exploring Greece's rich traditions and culture. Earning the Congressional Award taught me the value of goal setting, organization and perseverance, leading to the development of many skills that I shared with others to make my community a better place.

**Tristan Taylor**  
*Chicago, Illinois*  
*Advisor: Madeline O'Malley*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I organized a donation drive of socks, toiletries, and other items to benefit The Night Ministry, a non-profit based in Chicago that serves the homeless. I have spent time volunteering for South Suburban PADS, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and Best Buddies. I logged my Personal Development at The Beverly Country Club, where I have worked for the past five years. Through my years of caddying, I have developed in the areas of perseverance, determination integrity, fair play, sportsmanship, and working both independently and as part of a team. For my Physical Fitness, I ran for my school's championship winning cross country and track teams. I look forward to continuing to run on the club team at the University of Illinois. For my Expedition I traveled to Iceland in 2017 to learn about Icelandic culture and history, island biogeography, and arctic ecology. I have learned countless lessons about confidently taking on new and unexpected situations that I encountered during my travels. I am grateful for the honor of earning The Congressional Award, which really encouraged me to take on new challenges.

---

**Amanda Dynak**

*Harwood Heights, Illinois*

*Advisor: Jeanette Dziwulski*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed 411 hours of Voluntary Public Service through a combination of volunteering at my local senior home and tutoring students in STEM subjects. At the senior home, I supported individuals with dementia by offering companionship and creative stimulation through art. For Personal Development, I enriched the quality of my writing through journalism. I covered local stories for my school newspaper and even rose to the position of Editor in Chief. For Physical Fitness, I learned to play tennis and competed with a team for the first time. I joined my high school tennis team, trained to improve my serve, and successfully learned to play doubles. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned and executed a two-week trip to Boston, Massachusetts. I studied the city's unique role in Revolutionary War history by following the Freedom Trail and visiting local historic battle sites. The Congressional Award pushed me to build upon my strengths and passions, and use them to improve the wellbeing of my community.

**Michael Miller**

*Chicago, Illinois*

*Advisor: Chris Beukema*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, National Honor Society*

My Voluntary Public Service activity has run the gamut from working in the children's summer reading program at the public library, to working with animals in a rescue shelter, to baking cookies alongside developmentally disabled adults in a residential program, and working at the local food pantry. For my Personal Development goals, I used this as an opportunity to learn animation, develop my writing skills, expand my musical repertoire in piano, and read new types of fiction. I also explored various aspects of theatre production and management. For my Physical Fitness, I developed and improved my swimming skills so that I was eligible to join a recreational swim league. I became a certified scuba diver and have completed multiple open water dives. I also became a certified lifeguard and completed the American Red Cross first aid/CPR program. My Exploration activity was planning and completing an exploration of the Native Americans by visiting several reservation and historical sites in the western United States. Earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal has helped me to grow and develop as a person, to set goals and work toward them, and to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment.

---

**Max Bowman**

*Barrington, Illinois*

*Advisor: Michael Groble*

In earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed my Voluntary Public Service hours at the Chicago Adler Planetarium. I worked in the lab to design systems for use aboard high-altitude balloons with the goal of bringing real space science to the general public. For Personal Development, I studied for and competed on my high school math team. I learned a variety of mathematical topics not normally covered in high school through my experience and placed at State. For Physical Fitness, I set a goal of dropping my freshman hurdle time by 1.5 seconds. I dropped my time by a full two seconds by my junior year. For my Expedition, I planned a backpacking trip, where I hiked over sixty miles. In completing the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I cultivated a sense of dedication to volunteering, service, and personal improvement. The lessons and skills I learned, as well as the perseverance I developed, will no doubt serve me well in college and beyond.

**Daniel Claud**

*Chicago, Illinois*

*Advisor: Jennifer Laible*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service time as a counselor at an overnight wilderness camp for the summer of 2018. I led fifth and sixth graders to serve the Eagle River and Three Lakes communities. I also volunteered at a food pantry about once a week to serve the Northfield community. For my Personal Development activity, I improved upon my Violin skills and increased my repertoire. I became the first chair in my school's orchestra, went to different music festivals including ACSI and auditioned for ILMEA, and played in the pit orchestra for the school play. For Physical Fitness, I joined my school's volleyball team and played as a middle. I also joined a club swim team and achieved my goal of swimming a 50 free in under 30 seconds. For my Expedition, I led my family on a trip to learn more about the history and culture of Hawaii. We learned about the history of Hawaii by visiting famous landmarks of the Kingdom of Hawaii and learned about the U.S. involvement in Hawaii by visiting the Dole Plantation and Pearl Harbor. The Congressional Award has given me the motivation to do activities I would usually not aim for and has given me a new understanding of the world.

---

**Jacob Furfine**  
*Wilmette, Illinois*  
*Advisor: James Connolly*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service tutoring at nearby libraries, at chess tournaments, through online connections, and at my local school. I learned that students best learn the same material differently, and that it was my role to offer a variety of approaches. For Personal Development, I significantly increased my study and practice of chess. After an extended period of time, I was awarded the official title of FIDE Master by the Federation Internationale Des Echecs (World Chess Federation). For my Physical Fitness, I worked to improve my skill at basketball. I improved my endurance by increasing my regular jogging from 1 to 3 miles and increased my basketball skill by studying training videos and implementing the lessons during practices. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned an extensive trip to rural Montana. While there, I visited the Lewis and Clark interpretive center, the First Peoples Buffalo Jump, the copper mining town of Anaconda and historic Philipsburg. By participating in the Congressional Award, I have increased my ability to set long-term goals, both to improve myself and to help others.

**Ajay Balaraman**  
*Naperville, Illinois*  
*Advisor: Jeff Diorio*

To earn my Voluntary Public Service hours I tutored underprivileged kids and volunteered at the local arboretum. For Personal Development, I studied and played chess. For Physical Fitness, I played high school and club soccer. For my Expedition I planned a week long trip to three cities in Italy. I had an amazing experience working towards earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal, in the process it made me a more resilient and responsible youth.



---

**Audrey Pack**

*Aurora, Illinois*

*Advisor: Lee Lowe*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

I served over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service through community outreach and leadership in STEM as a member of a FIRST FRC robotics team and as board member of a STEM foundation. I also worked to promote inclusion through my Girl Scout Silver Award project and alleviate food insecurity in my community. My participation in FIRST robotics has led to Personal Development of leadership, technical, project management, and communication skills. I have had the opportunity to learn and lead through my roles as Team President, working on industrial safety, and strategic planning. I developed life long skills and interest in golf through achieving my Physical Fitness goals while earning the gold medal. Setting aside time to develop these skills got me active, met new people, and enjoyed time outdoors. A camping trip and exploring Iceland was both an outdoor skills expedition and cultural Exploration. I gained new skills through the planning process, experienced outdoor high adventure, saw the breathtaking natural beauty of this country, and learned about other cultures. By earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal I set goals, kept records, created relationships, and reflected on my progress. I developed skills that will help me in my education, personal life, and career.

**Katherine Pack**

*Batavia, Illinois*

*Advisor: Vesna Poirier*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, Key Club*

As a Girl Scout, I shared my love of the program through my Voluntary Public Service. I helped to recruit new leaders, introduce girls to scouting, help to run events, and lead my own troop of young girls as a Girl Scout Leader. Teaching for a summer in the slums of Pune, India I learned about joy, service, and education. For my Personal Development I developed skills in goal setting, learned perseverance, and gained knowledge through a four year seminary program. By choosing this goal, I formed personal study habits and a pattern of commitment that will benefit me as I continue my education and expand my personal faith. I love the outdoors, and through my Physical Fitness goals to develop my kayak, SUP and canoeing skills, I was able to participate in experiences and adventures that I thoroughly enjoyed. Not only is this an activity that I will participate in my entire life, but one I will share with others. I fell in love with the people, cultures and landscape of India. For my Exploration I traveled on my own in India for 2 weeks and learned about this amazing place, culture, and history, and also gained self confidence in my own independence and abilities. Earning the Congressional Award helped me to set measurable goals, become more self disciplined, and pause for reflection on the things I have accomplished.

---

**Cole Goggio**

*Naperville, Illinois*

*Advisor: Cort Graske*

*Affiliations: YMCA*

For my Voluntary Public Service I created a soap recycling plan which consisted of collecting soap from hotels recycling that soap and donating the proceeds to Hased House a local homeless shelter. I also created a video promoting volunteering at Hased House. I also volunteered at the YMCA in their learn to swim program. For Personal Development I participated in a robotics team where I learned to code and help others who were struggling. I also taught a class in American culture at the American Embassy in Struga Macedonia. For my Physical Fitness I was on the local hockey team for 3 years. I planned a trip to Ireland for my Expedition over the holidays to visit family there I learned a lot about what I was capable of.

**Sai Chalasani**

*Carmel, Indiana*

*Advisor: Craig Lammert, MD*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service activity at Indiana University Health (IUH) facilities from 2016 to 2018. IUH is a large hospital system in Indianapolis and it has several hospitals, clinics, surgery centers, and offices. My Personal Development activities were participating in biomedical research at Indiana University School of Medicine under Professor Andy Yu and Dr. Craig Lammert. My research was focused on immunology and autoimmune hepatitis. I was able to present 3 posters at a national meeting in Philadelphia. I was a varsity tennis and ultimate frisbee player at our school and that is how I accumulated 200 hours towards Physical Fitness. My Expedition was to China where I visited Xi'an and Beijing over a 7 day trip. This was a rich cultural and travel experience. This required extensive planning, but I am glad I chose trip to China as my Expedition project. The Congressional Award was a very rewarding experience because I was able to participate in a number of activities which made me disciplined, well rounded and compassionate.

---

**Agrayan Gupta**

*Zionsville, Indiana*

*Advisor: Arun Jain*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

As the chair for the youth group at my local Hindu Temple, I used my Voluntary Public Service time to organize events such as 5k runs to raise money to benefit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. I also volunteered at the children's museum by helping run museum activities. For my Personal Development I participated in my school's robotics team. I was the mechanical lead, allowing me to lead groups of students to prototype, computer design, and build a robot. I also was very involved in my Boy Scout troop, which allowed me to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. For my Physical Fitness, I played soccer on travel teams and in a league with my friends. Along with soccer, I ran track for the school team and independently. For my Expedition, my family traveled to Belize to explore Inca ruins and interact with local. By staying at a lodge hours away from a big city, we had a true immersive experience in the Belize culture and history. The Congressional Award pushed me to strive in all aspects of my extracurricular activities by setting and completing achievable goals that enabled personal development and growth.

**Aryaman Gupta**

*Zionsville, Indiana*

*Advisor: Brian Decker*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To complete the Voluntary Public Service portion of my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I spent hundreds of hours at my Temple dedicating time to serve the general public. I volunteered at Temple-driven activities including soup kitchens, healthcare days for the community, and 5k runs. For my Personal Development, I developed as a leader through my high school robotics program where I spent time serving as the mechanical lead. I guided my peers through the competition season to produce a high-level robot and now use the lessons learned from this experience to complete my Biomedical Engineering degree. I attained my Physical Fitness goals by playing in multiple soccer leagues throughout high school, from travel soccer to recreational soccer to intramural soccer. Learning how to become a better goalkeeper enhanced my agility and I steadily became a stronger player. I completed my Exploration by organizing a trip Belize to learn about the Mayan culture and spent my time hiking, visiting ruins while staying at an isolated lodge. I also had to work through challenges with the itinerary but it was an amazing experience. The journey of achieving the Congressional Award was one filled with successes, failures, and obstacles but at the end of the road, each new experience helped me develop as an individual.

---

**Vahin Vuppalanchi**

*Carmel, Indiana*

*Advisor: Linda Cook*

For the majority of my Voluntary Public Service hours, I worked with the Autoimmune Hepatitis Association doing data analysis and research. I also worked in the Goodman Hall Neurology Center studying Intracerebral Hemorrhaging. I also volunteered at my local senior center and library. For my Personal Development, I was awarded my first degree black belt after I failed to pass the test the first time. I also attempted to try yoga and model in to expand my skills in two new fields for me. For my Physical Fitness, I spent a lot of my hours running track at school. During the off-season, I tried ninja training as my favorite tv show: American Ninja Warrior inspired me to try to excel at such elite levels. With my parents permission, I spent my Expedition in Hawaii, a lifelong desire of mine. I then went to TripAdvisor to find notable attractions such as Road to Hana and Haleakala Crater.

**Amanda Feagans**

*Indianapolis, Indiana*

*Advisor: Steve Banet*

For the Voluntary Public Service, I had the amazing opportunity to volunteer within the healthcare setting through work with local hospitals and clinics. The experience allowed me to see the impact that small acts can have on helping others. In pursuing Personal Development, I had the opportunity to work part-time as a teaching assistant while attending school, to participate in a leadership development program focused on creating community outreach projects, and to dive into reading for personal interest. To improve Physical Fitness, I explored yoga techniques and began actively walking/running. The experience allowed me to discover new areas of interest in physical fitness while empowering me to achieve new fitness goals. For the my Exploration, I planned travels, learned about the history, and experienced different cultures of Hungary and the Czech Republic. The experience working towards the Congressional Award allowed me to grow through new experiences, helped me to become more disciplined through long-term goal setting, and helped me to see the ways in which I could give back to, serve, and become an active member in the communities I live in.

---

**Thaddaeus Alexander Guy Broussard**

*Sellersburg, Indiana*

*Advisor: Chris Quillet*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society, United States Navy*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered at the NAFC Animal Shelter for two years as an Animal Care technician. I also completed a year-long service project to renovate and improve park facilities at Lapping Park, including construction of new trailhead markers and tree identification plaques. For Personal Development, I trained weekly in jazz piano performance, and worked to hone my leadership skills by attending multiple week-long leadership conferences. For my Physical Fitness goal, I trained in martial arts, began long-distance running, and developed a daily workout plan. Finally, my Expedition to Puerto Rico was an adventure in language and culture that I will never forget! Overall, the Congressional Award was an amazing experience for me, and the skills I learned will last me a lifetime!

**Amy Ryan**

*Des Moines, Iowa*

*Advisor: Clarke Scanlon*

I earned the Congressional Award Gold Medal providing over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service to the Stephen Siller Tunnel to Towers Foundation, a 9/11 memorial organization raising money for catastrophically wounded veterans, fallen first responders, and Gold Star families with young children. For Personal Development, I took courses on financial literacy and developed a plan to pay off my student loans. I focused on improving my running skills for Physical Fitness. For my Expedition, I planned a week-long wilderness trip to Perrault Falls, Ontario, Canada where I learned to fish, build a fire, and navigate waters by boat. Through this experience to earn my Congressional Gold Medal, I found the tools, relationships, self-discipline needed to lay a foundation for continued service throughout adulthood.

---

**Aditi Malay**

*Topeka, Kansas*

*Advisor: Marcie Frederickson*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I distributed lunches to people in need during the summer and supervised children. I also digitized data at our local museum and read, assisted with activities, and played piano to entertain nursing home residents. For Personal Development, I played piano and began debate and forensics. In order to achieve my goals, I attended weekly piano classes, recitals, and piano competitions, as well as attended debate and forensics class, debate camp, and weekend tournaments. For Physical Fitness I continued classical Indian dance and playing tennis. I took 2 hour tennis classes, private lessons, and played at JV and Varsity meets with my school team. I also took 1 hour dance classes and participated in dance competitions, performances, and recitals. For my Expedition to New York I planned to try various cuisines and restaurants, visit museums, go on educational tours, and see a Broadway show.

**John Martin Tomlinson**

*Baldwin City, Kansas*

*Advisor: Anthony Edwards*

*Affiliations: People to People International, YMCA*

I fulfilled my Voluntary Public Service as a member of the Youth Volunteer Corps of Greater Kansas City's Youth Advisory Board by volunteering in a wide variety of projects in diverse areas, from community kitchens to urban gardens. I also worked with People To People International to raise funds for an orphanage in Zambia. I took guitar lessons, joined a band class and participated in workshops to become a better musician for Personal Development. This culminated in performing at festivals. For the Physical Fitness portion, I obtained my goal of passing lifeguard training, which required swim lessons. While attending high school in Germany on the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange Program, I planned my Expedition to the oldest town in Germany, Trier. My new German language skills enabled me to navigate the ancient Roman city and appreciate the culture. Pursuing the Congressional Award was a rewarding challenge; it provided me with a deeper sense of a purposeful life and taught me the skills to build a stronger community.

---

**Jillian Gillen**  
*Stilwell, Kansas*  
*Advisor: Caroline Kill*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service working with the elderly at Homestead of Leawood, an assisted living facility in my community, and also worked with children at a local summer camp. Working with different age groups like the elderly and young taught me valuable lessons about life and leadership. My dream was to play college volleyball, so I decided to use my Personal Development to strength train and condition beyond volleyball practice. I wanted to get faster, stronger, and increase my vertical to become a better player. I played club volleyball to complete my Physical Fitness goals. I always made sure to attend extra practices and lessons in order to get better in a specific skill or to get some extra help. I explored the Lake of the Ozarks, a popular Missouri state park, with my brother and grandma for my Expedition. I researched and determined what sites we would visit on our trip, including other state parks and attractions in the area, like the Bagnell Dam, Bridal Cave, Ha Ha Tonka State Park, and many more. I found that the organizations I worked with appreciated the help of a consistent and young volunteer, and I learned that the people in my community are truly grateful for the time I dedicated to them.

**Aasim Hawa**  
*Leawood, Kansas*  
*Advisor: Caroline Kill*

I volunteered at a local assisted living facility and interacted with the elderly by setting up games and music, cleaning up after meals, and participating in other activities. Also, I volunteered at a local hospital and facilitated lab technicians with overall lab activities. For Personal Development, I read and memorized the Holy Quran in order to strengthen my commitment to Islam. I practiced and reviewed multiple times a week to reach my goal. For the Physical Fitness portion, I participated in the Cross Country team at my school, and I also ran independently in order to improve my fitness. I was able to decrease my mile time by about 30 seconds. For my Exploration, I planned and went on a trip to Scandinavia to experience the culture there. I visited historical sites, went on city tours, and experienced the Norwegian fjords on this trip.

---

**Lucas (Luke) Lopatofsky**

*Overland Park, Kansas*

*Advisor: Dr. Kill*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service. During that time I focused on volunteering at local diaper and food banks across the Kansas City metro area. I also helped to improve the lives of children from ages one to ten. For Personal Development, I worked to enhance my reading and writing skills, and I also worked to improve my debate abilities. I increased my reading and writing skill enormously and learned many fundamentals that I was lacking. For my Physical Fitness, I played baseball on a club team and with my high school team. I played soccer with my high school, and I worked out. I wanted to improve my athletic abilities and become more of a team leader. I was able to become a captain of my baseball and soccer team. For my Expedition I traveled to Florida to learn about the different ecosystems and how they were affected by the hurricanes. Earning this award has been an extremely rewarding experience, and has taught me how to set long term goals and follow through.

**Tierra Beard**

*Louisville, KY, Kentucky*

*Advisor: Claudette Patton*

*Affiliations: YMCA*

In earning my Congressional Award, I volunteered on numerous projects at Simmons College of Kentucky, a historically black college located in Louisville. I also volunteered with Living On Purpose, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting individuals struggling with grief and loss. For my Personal Development, I worked at a part-time time job at St. Joseph Children's Home, a licensed residential treatment program, where I taught children. Additionally, I prepared for and won the title of Miss Simmons College at our Homecoming event, the first in Simmons College history. For Physical Fitness, I joined a fitness club and learned to improve my cardio and muscle strength with various exercise programs and conditioning, including walking great distances. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, which allowed me to explore both a beach environment while learning about the history of this area. My personal experience in earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal has truly strengthened my public speaking skills, leadership abilities and capacity to learn even more about strategic planning.



---

**Lucas Fortwengler**  
*Louisville, Kentucky*  
*Advisor: Claudette W. Patton*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

In earning my Congressional Award, I volunteered on numerous projects with the Boy Scouts of America and Downs Syndrome of Louisville, including performing with the Boogie Down Dancers at Shakespeare in the Park, local festivals and senior living communities. For my Personal Development, I worked part-time at a sporting goods store to improve my job skills, communications, team building and problem solving abilities. I shadowed my supervisor and learned quickly, setting customer service and sales records which allowed me to win recognition and awards. For my Physical Fitness, I learned how to improve my strength, tone and endurance with a personal trainer at the gym I joined and also how to include nutritious food to maintain my 40 pound weight loss. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum, Fort Sumter and the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. Spending the night on a ship, camping in the mountains, and learning how native American people lived before modern times were highlights of my experience. Earning my Congressional Award has been an amazing journey that has enhanced my life so I can continue to be a life learner and live independently with new goals I've set for myself.

**Demetrius Gunn**  
*Louisville, Kentucky*  
*Advisor: Claudette W. Patton*

While earning my Congressional Award, I volunteered to lead two community choirs. One choir was with Dismas Charities for women leaving prison and learning to re-enter society, and the other choir was with the West Louisville Performing Arts Academy, an inner-city charity. For Personal Development, I had a part-time position with a community choir where I taught voice lessons, learned to strengthen my direction skills, and improved my piano skills as an accompanist. I also marketed and scheduled performances, including the organization of traveling performances. For Physical Fitness, I learned to walk long distances and improve my stamina by adding good stretching and warm-up techniques, quality equipment and better nutrition. My Expedition included a week long cultural study of Israel that included by first airplane flight and opportunity to learn outside the USA. The different languages, food, music and religious backgrounds were very interesting and brought me to a better understanding of worldviews. Earning my award allowed me to push myself with difficult but attainable goals so that my creativity was stretched to a new and improved skill and performance level.

---

**Cammeron Durham**

*Finchville, Kentucky*

*Advisor: Jim Patton*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity, YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service. I volunteered with the Boy Scouts of America earning my Eagle Scout Rank, The Shelbyville Backpack Program, and a Habitat for Humanity auction. I learned the true meaning of public service by participating in these areas. For Personal Development, I earned my personal management merit badge and attended and led leadership conferences with the Kentucky YMCA. I now have great knowledge of personal finance, public speaking, and leadership skills. For the Physical Fitness portion, I increased my weight lifting capabilities, endurance and strength for hiking greater distances. Lastly, for my Expedition I completed the 100 mile trek at Philmont Scout Ranch, New Mexico in 11 days and reached the top of Baldy Mountain. Participating in The Congressional Award program was one of the greatest decisions of my life because it turned me into a more persistent, courageous, and overall good citizen.

**Benjamin Ferguson**

*Simpsonville, Kentucky*

*Advisor: James W. Patton*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

I volunteered on many community service projects with the Boy Scouts that benefited our local food bank and Friends of Scouting Campaigns. For my Eagle Scout project, I designed and built shelving for the band program at my High School that allowed them to store and protect their percussion equipment. For my Personal Development, I learned to play the piano and my skill increased from beginner to intermediate level in a nine month period. I also gained the confidence to perform in public. My focus for Physical Fitness was to improve my strength and endurance so I could complete a mountain hike at high elevation. My Expedition was a 12 day backpacking trek covering 100 miles at the Philmont Scout Reservation in Cimarron, New Mexico. The Congressional Award challenged me, introduced me to new experiences and helped me realize what I can achieve when I push myself.

---

**Nathanael Sangster**  
*Simpsonville, Kentucky*  
*Advisor: Jim Patton*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

While earning my Gold Medal I volunteered for many projects in my community including Scouting for Food at the local food bank, providing security for community fall festivals, honoring military veterans at Memorial Day events, and earning my Eagle Scout rank with a community project. For my Personal Development, I participated in my high school academic team and competed in numerous regional and state competitions. I also developed my public speaking and presentation skills by participating and leading sessions in National Youth Leadership Training seminars. For Physical Fitness, I wanted to improve my cycling skills and speed and complete a 3 minute mile. My best time after months of training was 2 minutes 41 seconds. For my Expedition, I planned a 12-day backpacking trip with Boy Scout Troop 470 to Philmont, New Mexico where we climbed Mt. Baldy. I experienced many challenges throughout the strenuous trek but it was a great opportunity for growth and learning endurance. My time spent earning the Congressional Award has helped me see how important it is to give back to my community and learn how to be more grateful for the opportunities I have experienced. I hope to recruit others in my community to earn their Gold Medal and grow from the experience.

**Alex Satterwhite**  
*Shelbyville, Kentucky*  
*Advisor: James W. Patton*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To earn my Gold Medal for the Congressional Award I completed several Voluntary Public Service projects with the Boy Scouts. My favorite project was the restoration of a local cemetery which helped me earn my Eagle Scout rank. For Personal Development I set very ambitious goals of improving my marksmanship and gun safety skills. This helped me qualify to become the captain of my high school JROTC rifle team. For Physical Fitness I improved my strength, endurance, and overall health to better qualify for opportunities with JROTC. For my Expedition I planned a 5-night marksmanship-focused camping experience, and learned more from coaches to help me improve in small arms fire. I also learned skills in fishing and wilderness safety. Earning the Congressional Award taught me responsibility, organizational skills, and the resilience to complete a difficult task.

---

**Alderic Senecal**

*Simpsonville Kentucky, Kentucky*

*Advisor: Jim Patton*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed several Voluntary Public Service projects in my community including helping organize community festivals, teaching teambuilding skills to children and building a sidewalk at the Martha Layne Collins High School which helped me earn my Eagle Scout rank. For Personal Development, I studied and practiced the Mellophone so my skills greatly improved as I performed regularly with my high school marching band and at band competitions. I also worked at a retail store in sales as my first job and learned valuable lessons in customer service and management. For Physical Fitness, I trained and worked out many hours at a gym and also went on many weeks of strenuous practice hikes to build up my endurance for my expedition. For my exhibition I planned a 12-day trip to the Boy Scout Ranch in Philmont, New Mexico which involved hiking on rugged trails, camping outdoors every night and activities along the way. I completed the 100 mile trek and made it to the top of Baldy Mountain which is an elevation of 12,400 feet. Participating in the Congressional Award program has been a very rewarding experience and has been a journey I will carry with me throughout my life.

**William Longworth**

*Grasonville, Maryland*

*Advisor: Henry Faxon*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public service with the Boy Scouts and National Ski Patrol. I also participated in various service activities including designing and installing specialized lighting fixtures at the Spaceflight America Museum and Science Center. For Personal Development, I taught myself advanced computer coding to compete in extracurricular STEM activities, such as the State Mathematics, Engineering, Science and Achievement(MESA) Cyber Robot competitions, Regional Computer Science Bowls, and the 2018 Intel International Science Fair(ISEF). For Physical Fitness, I spent many hours working on developing my snow skiing skills to ski in a strong and stable manner and while maneuvering with a toboggan, and mountain biking which helped me be prepared to be a National Ski and Bike Patrol volunteer. For my Expedition, my endurance training included backpacking parts of the Appalachian Trail. I planned and executed a week-long backpacking trip at Philmont Scout Ranch. Along the way I challenged myself by hiking the three famous peaks of Philmont; Mt. Baldy, Tooth of Time, and Mt. Phillips. The Congressional Award was valuable experience which afforded life lessons such as perseverance, endurance, exploration of the areas out of my comfort zone, and innovative thinking.

---

**Benjamin Smith**  
*Salisbury, Maryland*  
*Advisor: Dawn Spicer*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I GPS mapped and transcribed historic headstones of African American slaves and Civil War union soldiers to preserve a historic site. I also helped feed the needy in my community and served as a camp counselor to children. For my Personal Development I developed the art of landscaping and the art of playing music in a local band. I obtained part time employment as a Life Guard. For Physical Fitness I increased my batting average in baseball and my shooting percentage in basketball. I also decreased my golf handicap. For my Expedition I explored the route of the Underground Railroad, traveling the route from Cambridge Maryland to Wilmington Delaware. With each new goal I set for myself, my determination grew but it was with each goal that I met when I saw my perseverance became influential to others.

**Joseph Farroha**  
*Columbia, Maryland*  
*Advisor: Cliff Dize*  
*Affiliations: Special Olympics, United States Air Force, United States Army, United States Coast Guard, United States Marine Corps, United States Navy*

For my Personal Development I collected clothing, food and toys to donate to multiple charitable organizations as well as organizing neighborhood cleanup days. For my Personal Development, I took engineering and advanced college calculus over the summers, which paved a path for me to achieve my scholarly objectives. For Physical Fitness I played JV and Varsity basketball, cross-country, and tennis. The Congressional Award enabled me to set goals of enhancing my athleticism and expanding my team contribution. For my Expedition I explored the fascinating history and culture of Germany, the fulfillment of a life-long dream. This desire to immerse myself into German history came from studying President Reagan's impassioned "Tear down this wall" speech at the Brandenburg Gate. Attaining the Congressional Award Gold Medal was a great learning experience in how to set goals and achieve them, skills that will serve me for the rest of my life!

---

**Bridgette Kim**

*Fulton, Maryland*

*Advisor: Angela Furlow*

For four years I volunteered at an Alzheimer's nursing home facility, where I provided assistance, moral support and friendship to the marginalized residents. I spent time reading to the residents, taking individual residents on walks and leading card and bingo games for small groups of residents. For my Personal Development I volunteered for 3 years at an urgent care clinic where I greeted patients, checked in patients and helped out wherever needed. I met dementia patients and kept a journal of my observations of different stages of Alzheimer's and potential short and long term remedies that worked best. I had severe asthma and took up swimming at age 9 to improve my breathing and lung capacity. For my Physical Fitness I kept swimming year-round, improving so much that I achieved a lifetime best in high school and made the junior national cut in 100 breaststroke. For my Expedition I raised funds to travel to Paris, France to visit two renowned museums: the Louvre Museum and the Musee D'Orsay. I created a photo journal book for underprivileged children who have never been to Paris or anywhere abroad. After my trip, I met with Baltimore low-income students and shared my book. Earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal was the crowning achievement of my high school experience and I am grateful that I had the opportunity to persevere until I reached my goals!

**Candace Star Anderson**

*Oxon Hill, Maryland*

*Advisor: John Washington*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service I helped out in several areas in my community. I worked at my local food banks, assisted in making meals for the homeless, helped educate children on STEM fields, and volunteered at several STEM events. For my Personal Development I learned a lot about robotics technologies through joining a robotics team and later by mentoring younger girls through Vex, Vex Iq, and Project Lead the Way and gained a love robotics. For Physical Fitness I learned a self defense method called Krav Maga which is a very physically intensive self defense tactic that is overall peaceful. For my Expedition I flew to Colorado to learn more about the native cultures that used to live there and I learned about how they treated the environment with respect for the land.

---

**Alex Jin**

*Darnestown, Maryland*

*Advisor: Melissa Nagy*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I became a certified Emergency Medical Responder and provided first aid at local and D.C. events as part of the Montgomery County First Aid Unit. My junior year, I served as Captain, running the unit, leading meetings, coordinating standbys, and training recruits. For Personal Development, I attended weekly piano lessons and practiced at home to improve my technical skill and knowledge of music. I achieved my goal of passing level 5 in the Carnegie Hall Royal Conservatory Program. For Physical Fitness, I practiced the martial art of Tae Kwon Do, mastering various forms, kicks, rolls, and flips, as well as sparring and board breaking. In 2017 I passed the 2nd Dan black belt test and have been teaching new students as well as continuing to improve my own technique. For my Expedition, I planned a week-long backpacking trip in the Monongahela National Forest. I studied the immense ecological diversity of the region and traversed the many micro-ecosystems formed by the wide variations in elevation and patterns of precipitation. The Congressional Award was an empowering experience that allowed me to cultivate my passions and helped me gain confidence in my abilities and ambitions.

**Robin Mia Tian**

*Potomac, Maryland*

*Advisor: Juewen Zhuang*

For my Voluntary Public Service I planned and participated in community outreach activities as a member of the board of Churchill Junior Civitans. I also taught free Kung Fu classes at a Chinese school. Anyone was allowed to attend, and I taught important values of hard work, discipline, and exercise. For my Personal Development I worked to improve my Kung Fu, specifically my jumps and endurance. My goal was to place at the 2nd Taolu World Cup in Yangon, Myanmar. After rigorous training, I placed bronze in broadsword. For Physical Fitness I play soccer with my team in order to improve my athletic abilities and soccer skills. I also strived to become one step closer to getting recruited to play soccer at the college level. I planned an Expedition to Hawaii with my family. We visited multiple islands and tried everything from wind-surfing to coconut ice cream. The experience of applying for the Congressional Award taught me how to effectively manage my time.

---

**Thomas Pallan**

*Sparks, Maryland*

*Advisor: Amanda Sanacore*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Special Olympics*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered over 400 hours to the Department of Veteran Affairs Hospital in Baltimore City. I helped transport patients around the hospital and took patient samples to the lab. I also assisted doctors and nurses with anything else they needed help with. My Personal Development goal was to improve my trumpet playing skills in order to join an honor band. To achieve this, I practiced my trumpet for one hour daily. Through my practice, I was able to play in a high school honor band through Towson University. For Physical Fitness, I worked to improve my tennis serve speed by 15 miles per hour. I practiced tennis at my local courts and played competitive matches around Baltimore County in order to improve my overall game as well. For my Expedition, I participated on an 11 consecutive night camping trip on Philmont Scout Ranch. I hiked 60 rigorous miles through the wilderness of New Mexico and climbed a 4,193 foot mountain. The Congressional Award has helped me develop diligence and perseverance, two skills that I will use everyday for the rest of my life.

**Elizabeth Rice**

*Columbia, Maryland*

*Advisor: David Weeks*

As a volunteer for St. Vincent de Paul summer camp for homeless children, I made my contribution in improving the quality of life of homeless kids. My Personal Development was comprehensive. I played in community theaters, took drawing lessons and learned languages, but my favorite activity was playing the piano. I passed five levels of Maryland musicianship tests and learned to be comfortable playing challenging music pieces. Throughout my high school years I was played varsity soccer and varsity and club lacrosse, which was my Physical Fitness activity. I was a school team co-captain and lead my team to a conference victory. My Expedition was my first solo trip to Munich, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Brussels. It opened my eyes and made me confident and ready for challenges. This program encouraged me to become a world traveller and to learn how to do it independently. This program taught me how to set and achieve goals and how to become a more accomplished person. It was a great guide that encouraged a caring and conscientious attitude towards society and its people.



---

**Orion Gangopadhyay**

*Bethesda, Maryland*

*Advisor: Danielle Montgomery*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America*

To earn the Gold Medal, I committed to Voluntary Public Service and provided civic engagement within the local community for over 600 hours as an Eagle Scout. This included leading a project to benefit a local animal shelter and other organizations such as military families and the NIH. For Personal Development, I undertook a goal to improve my First-Aid skills. Ultimately, I worked towards becoming a certified Emergency Medical Technician at my local fire station. For my Physical Fitness goal, I decided I would set and train for specific endurance, strength and agility metrics. I also learned how nutrition plays a large role in achieving a balance in my fitness achievements. During my Exploration, I planned a five-night trip to Europe. This included research and gaining fascinating insights into the historic and architectural significance of Paris, France and London, England. Through the Congressional Award, I gained the self-confidence to undertake new challenges and enriching experiences that made me greatly appreciate the role of others in helping me persevere and reach my goals.

**Jonathan Simak**

*Rockville, Maryland*

*Advisor: Suzanne Bode*

I volunteered in the field of water conservation performing water quality monitoring, stream cleaning, and restoration. I participated in advocacy meetings, and environmentally oriented activities to help the Chesapeake Bay such as rebuilding oyster reef ecosystem. I volunteered in nature centers. For my Personal Development, I attended extracurricular field courses, conferences, and lessons about aquatic and marine biology, water quality and pollution. I worked on research projects in ichthyology where I helped to design the studies, performed experiments, analyzed and presented data and won multiple science awards. For Physical Fitness I attended multiple fencing lessons every week and fencing camps in the summer. I worked on my speed and technique. I attended fencing tournaments and renewed my C rating in saber which qualified me to fence in the highest Division 1 competitions and at Junior Olympics. My Exploration took me to different ecosystems of Everglades National Park, kayaking and hiking and studying fish and reptiles. I used different fishing techniques (including fly-fishing and cast-netting) to document various fish species and took pictures of found fish and reptile species. Working on the Congressional Award I learned a lot not just in my field of interest - aquatic biology, especially ichthyology and fishing, but also in related areas of environmental law, data analysis, and wildlife photography.

---

**Michael Akerson**

*Sterling, Massachusetts*

*Advisor: Melissa Joyce*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, Special Olympics*

My Voluntary Public Service activity centered around helping those most in need within my community. I served as assistant coach for a youth baseball team for 3 seasons, raked leaves for the elderly, and served meals at a local food pantry. My Personal Development goals centered around three areas: improving my overall fitness by developing and implementing a strength training regimen, earning money to pay for college by working as a Little League umpire, and enhancing my public speaking skills by becoming actively involved in DECA. My Physical Fitness goals revolved around specific improvements with regard to my performance in baseball and basketball. My Expedition involved the clearing of a 200 year old historic cart road at a farm in Massachusetts. My participation in the Congressional Award pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught me important lessons about time management, goal setting, and resourcefully solving any problems that occurred in the execution of my goals.

**Jean-Pierre De Jesus-De La Cruz**

*Worcester, Massachusetts*

*Advisor: Aglaya Caycedo*

To earn my Gold Medal, I volunteered after school to teach and assist students in the Robotics Club. I worked with the students to improve their skills and spark their interest in a new STEM hobby. I set a goal in Personal Development to improve on the violin. I learned to sight read more efficiently, increased the dexterity in my left hand and improved the quality of sound while playing. I participated in many lessons and practiced at home and in the orchestra. For Physical Fitness I wanted to improve my overall fitness, endurance and strength by being active every day. I would go bike riding, walking, and take weekly Martial Arts classes. Through my hard work I have noticed that my endurance has increased, and I am now faster when running. For my Exploration I planned a trip to Israel and Palestine with the Al Kamandjati Orchestra. This trip was a chance for me improve my musical skills but also to experience a new culture.

---

**Harsh Choudhary**  
*Holliston, Massachusetts*  
*Advisor: Elisa Taylor*

For my Voluntary Public Service I served as an exhibit hall interpreter at the Museum of Science in Boston, where I engaged visitors as I facilitated activities in such a manner that they were able to reach their own conclusions. In this process of they developed skills in scientific inquiry, engineering design, and math. For my Personal Development, I have continually developed my level of photography. I published a photography blog that compiled all of my photographs and experiences from my travels to roughly two dozen countries. For my Physical Fitness, I competed on a Competitive Rowing Club Team. It became a central commitment, as it took involvement six days a week. For my Expedition, I took a road trip through Morocco. I immersed my self in a drastically different culture as I explored the country and learned about its history.

**Justin Chang**  
*Middleton, Massachusetts*  
*Advisor: Ritamarie Macadino*  
*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service I tutored economically disadvantaged students at the Lawrence Boys and Girls Club, volunteered in a variety of positions at several medical centers, and pursued a service project in the Dominican Republic through the Mariposa Foundation, which aims to benefit the lives of girls living there. I have been playing in several school bands and taking extracurricular lessons for the saxophone for nine years, which I did for my Personal Development. Playing the saxophone has been a way for me to improve myself and to meet other students with similar interests. For my Physical Fitness I improved my ability to play squash through an extensive set of drills and out-of-school practices that spanned three years and allowed me to make many new friends on the court. I planned an Expedition alongside several members of my local Boys Scouts troop to Sea Base, a BSA National High Adventure site at the Florida Keys. At Sea Base, we underwent a rigorous seven days on the 63-foot-long S.S. Observation. To me, the Congressional Award characterized a journey of mental, physical, and moral improvement.

---

**Connor Ryan**

*Hamilton, Massachusetts*

*Advisor: Jennifer Flynn*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, YMCA*

I volunteered by helping veterans, selling Christmas trees to raise funds, and assisting 11 Boy Scouts with their Eagle projects. My own Eagle project included the planning, fundraising and building of an information kiosk at a local pool. For Personal Development, I learned to hang glide off sand dunes, participated in two History Fairs at the State Level, and started a Robotics Club at my high school. Our new team won a Greater Boston Rookie of the Year award and I learned about mechanical engineering. For Physical Fitness, I improved my endurance to play entire varsity soccer games without getting too tired. In winter and spring Track I improved my form and speed as a sprinter. For my Exploration I planned a trip to Tanzania where I immersed myself among the wildlife in the National Parks, marveled at the geology of the Ngorongoro Crater and Serengeti grasslands, and visited Maasai and other tribal villages. The Congressional Gold Medal was a great goal to pursue requiring dedication, perseverance, and appreciation of those who supported me along the journey.

**Calli Bianchi**

*Scituate, Massachusetts*

*Advisor: Sam Silverman*

Working towards the Congressional Award I volunteered at Camp Sunshine to help children with life threatening illnesses. I also volunteered with my local Watershed Association to protect our waters and natural resources and subsequently started a nonprofit company that harvests invasive green crabs. My goal for Personal Development was to become a more competitive softball player which I achieved by going to the batting cage regularly and training throughout the year. For my Physical Fitness goal I learned to play volleyball. Having never played before I was happy to play on my school's varsity team for the past three years as an outside hitter. My Expedition was one of my favorite parts of this experience. I traveled to Maine and camped in Acadia National Park, exploring the beautiful beaches and hiking along the rugged coastline. My experiences while working toward the Congressional Award Gold Medal have been so rewarding, especially my time volunteering and I am hoping to continue to pursue these opportunities in college.

---

**Dwyn McNeil**

*Bridgewater, Massachusetts*

*Advisor: Mrs. Lisa Tufano*

To earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed my Voluntary Public Service goal by working at two animal shelters. I had a lot of fun giving back to my community and making a difference. It is very satisfying to help create a safe haven for pets while they wait to find their forever homes. For Personal Development, I decided to focus on improving my golf game and spent 350 hours strengthening my skills. Through lessons, practice, and participating in tournaments, I became more consistent. I improved my average score and even earned a spot on the junior varsity golf team. To achieve my goal in Physical Fitness, I improved my ability as a swimmer and accomplished 715 hours swimming with the Bluefish Swim Club and my high school team. I greatly improved each of the four strokes. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to Maine for a 15 day Outward Bound Sailing and Rock Climbing course. I lived on a 30-foot open hulled sailboat and sailed 45 miles using only sails and oars. During the trip, I learned about my strengths and more importantly how to overcome my weaknesses. The Congressional Award helped me stay motivated and kept me on track to achieve my long-term goals. The four program areas provided a roadmap on how to become well rounded and kept me from losing site of what is truly important. I am thankful that I learned many valuable life lessons throughout my Gold Medal journey.

**Marvin Jiang**

*Troy, Michigan*

*Advisor: Anne Young*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I became very involved with three separate organizations within my school: NHS, Project LEAD, and buildOn. They taught me the importance of public service, and I completed my goals enthusiastically through serving in these clubs. For Personal Development, I continued to play the saxophone. My love for the instrument dramatically increased through my participation in the award. I practiced more hours every week than I ever did, and I loved every second of it. For Physical Fitness, tennis has been my outlet for stress and a source of relaxation for a long time. However, by setting my goal of increasing my skill level for tennis, not only did I enjoy my time on the court, but I saw my skills develop as well as my enjoyment of the sport. For my Expedition, I had never planned an entire trip before becoming involved with the Congressional Award. An experience that I had always wanted to try was backpacking, so I planned a five-day backpacking trip with my brother. I organized plane tickets, permits, and supplies. My time with the Congressional Award has truly been a critical period in my life, and through setting goals, I have pushed myself to grow to become the person I am today.

---

**Avery James Lehr**  
*Saint Paul, Minnesota*  
*Advisor: Michael DiNardo*  
*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity*

Through Voluntary Public Service to Habitat for Humanity, I learned that service comes in many forms and to serve your community, you must come together as a community. My Personal Development helped me move up scouting. As a new Scout, I watched and listened to my older peers in order to learn; however, as I took more responsibility, the program led me from learning, learning to teach and f The Congressional Award helped me to make leaps and bounds in my Physical Fitness, athletic skill and ability to run long distance. I went from being one of the last finishers in long distance running to running my first 10K in only an hour. While my 16 day Alaskan Expedition was more challenging than previous outdoor experiences, the accomplishments that impacted me the most were the internal ones—including learning to embrace change, being part of a team and being given the privilege of serving as a peer leader. To me, the Congressional Award was something that started out as a “to do” list to gain additional life skills, however, it ended up being much more than that and I find that I have become a more complete and fulfilled person.

**Taylor Fields**  
*Aberdeen, Mississippi*  
*Advisor: Dr. Linda Mitchell*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service I promoted my individual service project *Someone Can See Through Your Eyes*. We collecting used eye glasses for 3rd world countries, performed in anti-bully plays, and mentoring elementary students in STEM projects. For Personal Development I served on the 4-H State Ambassador Leadership Team. I competed and won first place in public speaking and visual presentation and postal girl for Mississippi 4-H. For Physical Fitness I maintained my health through cheerleading, competitive cheer competitions, gymnastics, routine fitness walking and serving as a cheer camp mentor for school age children. I traveled and toured New Orleans, Louisiana, to experience its culture, music, and food for my Expedition. Learning of its traditions and the melting pot of racial identities was a great education for me. By participating in the Congressional Award program, I have gained a broader perspective about my life goals. While participating in the program, my skills in leadership, public speaking, and communication improved significantly in helping mold me into a more confident and responsible citizen.

---

**Jessica Gates**

*Tueplo, Mississippi*

*Advisor: Teresa Roberts*

*Affiliations: 4-H, American Red Cross*

For my Voluntary Public Service I participated in the State 4-H Technology Team. I mentored third grade elementary students during STEM Fields Days. Also, I taught a variety of science-based teachings on the concept of science experiments. For Physical Fitness I attended required trainings for STEM projects. I attended several workshops to enhance my understanding in technology, agriculture, science, and engineering. For Physical Fitness I attended workshops to learn about the food ingredients to maintain a healthy diet and healthy lifestyle relating to health and fitness. For my Expedition I directed tours on STEM Field Days at different locations. I attended several workshops to enhance my understanding in technology, agriculture, science, and engineering. By participating in the Congressional Award program while working part-time, I have become became very skillful in time-management and how to multi-task. I have gained greater confidence in public speaking, communicating with others, and fulfilling leadership roles. I have embraced a main “duty” of being a good citizen by volunteering to aid others in the community.

**Jacob Lindsey**

*Shannon, Mississippi*

*Advisor: Linda Mitchell*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service I helped shop for, pack and deliver food bags which provided weekend food for students in need. I also assisted with packing and delivering food to these students during the summer. I assisted a food pantry with fund raisers and by packing food boxes and delivering them to the needy. Several of my friends from diverse backgrounds wanted to have a soccer team at our school and asked me to lead the effort. For my Personal Development I talked with the athletic director, found someone willing to coach, and met with school officials numerous times. We fielded our first soccer team this year. For Physical Fitness I worked with my high school coach and a tennis instructor to develop better volleys and understand how and when to hit shots with spin. I practiced these skills at least three times a week. I placed third in the state tennis tourney last year and have advanced to the semi-finals this year. I planned and executed a nine night ten day Exploration trip to Italy with my family. I visited its chapels, museums and art galleries to learn more about its past and present. I talked to tour guides and local residents to better my understanding of the country. I have learned how to challenge myself to reach new goals and explore different opportunities.

---

**Morgan Lyons**

*Plantersville, Mississippi*

*Advisor: Linda Mitchell*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service I tutored at a local daycare three days a week and one day a week at El Centro for Hispanic students. I collected and delivered newspapers for the local animal shelter. I assisted with food drive for needy families during the holiday season. For Personal Development I conducted the Plantersville's Mayor Youth Council meetings using the Robert's Rules of Order. I attended 4H National congress, 4H club congress and American Legion Auxiliary girl state. I also attended a leadership seminar for Chuck E Cheese team leaders. For my Physical Fitness I began a regimen of walking and jogging combined for 45 minutes a day three days a week. I was to build endurance while being physically active. For my Expedition I met with and set up a date with the farm owner. I begin extensive research about saddlebred horses. I went to the library and got books, watched you tube videos on the different riding styles and read many articles on the internet. I went and purchased items needed for my adventure. Through Congressional Awards, I have learned stepping outside my comfort zone is not as scary as it seems at first. My original opinion about a subject does not necessarily hold true. My self-confidence has grown. My courage has increased. My frame of reference has expanded. However, the best take away of all is the fact that I have changed. It is not just about the initial experience but also about the knowledge that I have deeper reserves that I can call upon when needed. This will influence my life not simply an event in my life.

**Kacilyn Pegues**

*Shannon, Mississippi*

*Advisor: Teresa Roberts*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service hours promoting my individual service projects *Cans for Hands & Anti-Bully*. We collected nonperishable food for Salvation Army, performing in anti-bully plays, and mentoring elementary students in STEM projects. For Personal Development I served as 4-H State Vice President on the State Ambassador Leadership Team. I served as a National 4-H Convention & Congress Delegate, Vice President of my local club, competed in Public Speaking and Visual presentations, winning first place in both categories. I maintained Physical Fitness through my high school marching band which has received a "Superior" rating, fitness walking, an volunteering planting and picking vegetables in community gardens. For my Expedition I traveled and toured Gatlinburg, Tennessee to experience its culture, music, and food. Meeting new people of different backgrounds was a great education for me. By participating in the Congressional Award program, I have become more skillful in leadership, public speaking, and social interactions which contribute to the successes of my community service. My leadership and communication skills have developed to the degree that I am confident in initiating and enlarging conversations that matter.



---

**Callie Shae Philips**  
*Tupelo, Mississippi*  
*Advisor: Linda Mitchell*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I worked with kids in a variety of categories to help them learn more about themselves and the world we live in. I have run cooking camps, science camps, and many other educational programs, where kids have experienced amazing opportunities to learn. For my Personal Development I strived to improve my communication and performance skills. I did this by participating in several plays that ranged from dramatic to comedy. One of these plays actually traveled to Washington D.C. and New York, which we performed for the underprivileged kids. For my Physical Fitness, I made it my goal to try different types of physical activities so that I may have a range of different experiences. I tried different things such as walking, running, badminton, roller skating, and ice skating. Overall I must say that skating was the most impactful. For my Expedition I planned a nine-day trip to Colorado, where my family and I went skiing and experienced the western culture. On this trip we tried new food, new sites, and a new culture. It was this experience that led me to want to travel the world and learn about different cultures. This was an experience that changed my life and helped me grow as a person, and I will never forget all that I have learned from this program.

**Mikayla Shelton**  
*Bruce, Mississippi*  
*Advisor: Trent Barnett*  
*Affiliations: 4-H, American Red Cross, National Honor Society*

To bring awareness to the Mississippi 4-H program, my Voluntary Public Service was to advocate for the organization. There was a need in my community to assist children lacking proper attention in the classroom and I chose to spend a day a week focusing on their needs. My ultimate Personal Development goal was to confidently deliver a speech to a large group of people and become a MS 4-H State Officer. I did so by writing and delivering speeches to different groups of people and became better with time and effort. I also learned that communicating with others goes a long way. To complete the requirements for the Physical Fitness portion and better myself, I chose to ride bikes outdoors, attend spin classes, and gradually work my way up to biking 11-12 miles in 45-minute increments at least three days a week. I planned and executed a nine-day Expedition in England, Ireland, and Wales. I visited cathedrals, historical landmarks, and areas rich in European history. I assessed architectural beauty, local geography, and became increasingly aware of how important it is to learn about global cultures. I am overjoyed that I completed every single goal that I set for myself on the journey of becoming a Congressional Award Gold Medalist.

---

**Maurissa Shumpert**  
*Tupelo, Mississippi*  
*Advisor: Teresa Roberts*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

My Voluntary Public Service was spent promoting my individual service project *Expressive Art for Children*, providing arts and crafts workshops for children, supporting my club's partnership with Mississippi Minority Farmers' Alliance's Technology Center. For Personal Development I designed and won the 2015 State 4-H Club Congress t-shirt Contest and created the t-shirt theme, "Admission to the Future." I served on the Lee County Ambassador Leadership Team and as my club's Treasurer. Also, I represented the 4-H as a National 4-H Congress Delegate. I maintained Physical Fitness by participating in my high school marching band and performed in the "Band of Parades" for the 2017 Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C. In addition, I planted and picked vegetables in my family garden and community garden as a great way to give back. For my Expedition I traveled to Washington D.C. for the first time by way of airplane and then to New York by train. My experience in both cities were a great unique learning experience and very memorable.

**Clemmie Weddle**  
*Vardaman, Mississippi*  
*Advisor: Trent Barnett*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service I wanted to create awareness for certain causes and programs. I volunteered as a guest speaker for several events, and I also donated 12 inches of my hair after my high school graduation to Children with Hair Loss. For Personal Development I wanted to improve my public speaking skills, so I began to prepare my own speech content, practice my delivery methods, and find events to speak at. I also worked my way up to larger crowds. I started at audiences of 20 people and grew to over 250. To reach my Physical Fitness goal, I wanted to be able to walk half a mile in under 15 minutes. To do this, I time myself every time I walked, and endeavored to complete the distance quicker each time attempted. For my Expedition, I wanted to experience a culture shock. I planned a week long trip to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. The consistent fast pace of Gatlinburg, Tennessee was a completely new experience for me, and the ultimate bravery of the wildlife in Cade's Cove also shocked me. While working towards my Gold Medal, I learned exactly how far I could push myself. I also learned that big goals are to be worked towards in small steps. Greatness doesn't happen overnight.

---

**Cammie Moore**  
*Grenada, Mississippi*  
*Advisor: Chantel Chandler*  
*Affiliations: 4-H, Key Club*

For my Voluntary Public Service I co-organized needed items and distributed flood relief kits for recent flood victims in the area. I also co-planned a STEM activity for local elementary students. For Personal Development I dedicated twelve hours a week to prepare for weekly Friday night performances. I was accountable for the given sheet music to put to memory and strove to be part of the bigger picture, unity, as the front ensemble is looked at as a single unit. For Physical Fitness I was on the tennis team. Also I continually go to the gym almost everyday to prepare myself to the best I can be. For my Expedition, me and some friends went camping in the woods. We had to find fire wood, create a fire, set up the tent. The experience I gained from this expedition was that enjoying fellowship with friends. Over the past four years while working toward my Congressional Award, I have become better at setting personal goals along with working hand in hand with my community leaders to assist with their goals. I also have discovered the impact one can make by contributing to the community. I have developed new social skills, as well as personal skills. I have been able to assess my strengths and weakness. I feel I have matured greatly while working toward completing my award.

**Bree Baker**  
*St. Louis, Missouri*  
*Advisor: Allison LiCavoli*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I was involved in National Charity League, which works with over 30 charities. I have spent every summer working with Variety St. Louis as a volunteer with their summer camp. The camp works with children with disabilities. This experience has made me want to become a Pediatric Nurse. I focused on learning a Spanish as a second language as my Personal Development. For my Physical Fitness I competed nationally on a synchronized figure skating team. This was a great experience which taught me about the importance of being part of a team and setting goals to achieve and succeed. I planned a trip to Chicago for my Expedition. The purpose of was to visit different cultural areas within the Chicago area. I loved seeing the different cultural museums and restaurants. This experience taught me how so many times we miss the wonderful different cultures within our own community. This experience has made me a more rounded individual and also made me recognize some of my strengths. I know helping out makes a difference not only in my community but just being a role model to my peers.

---

**Andrew Freund**

*St. Louis, Missouri*

*Advisor: Scott Cornwell*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society, Special Olympics*

I enjoyed my many hours of Voluntary Public Service with the Boy Scouts of America and working with children in local summer camps. My favorite opportunity was a mission trip to Costa Rica where I developed carpentry skills, met gracious people, and enjoyed the beauty of the country. For my Personal Development I grew as a leader in programs at my school and was able to experience an urban social justice immersion week. My favorite experience was joining a Partner's Club which pairs students with and without disabilities for games, crafts, community service, school events and fun. In Physical Fitness I became skilled in Aikido Martial Arts and participated on the school Swim & Dive Team where I recently earned the Coach's Choice Award for Determination. My Exploration to Los Angeles was incredible as I explored opportunities in film, television, and broadcast journalism. Thank you to the Congressional Award sponsors for this journey.

**Robert "Trey" Freund III**

*St. Louis, Missouri*

*Advisor: Scott Cornwell*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity, National Honor Society, Special Olympics*

While working for the Congressional Award logged over 450 hours of Voluntary Public Service with various organizations including Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis, where I collected and donated over 3,000 books for children of adult patients for over three years. While working on my Personal Development I had the opportunity to grow in leadership as I have acted as Student Body President, served on the Principal's Leadership Panel, and represented my school at Missouri Boy's State. Recently these skills have helped me to be nominated to my hometown's new City of Ladue Youth Council. For Physical Fitness I had a goal to become a faster runner on my school's Cross Country and Track and Field teams, but this award has added to the challenge of beating my fastest times every season. One major highlight of the program was my Exploration of Washington D.C. Politics and history have always been major interests and it was inspirational to prepare for and experience the trip.

---

**Nathaniel Marsters**

*Frontenac, Missouri*

*Advisor: Amy Gassel*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I was active in volunteering at my local library and community, helping others through the educational route. At the library, I spent time to sign kids, teens, and adults into the summer reading club to keep expanding knowledge through the summer. In school, I tutored younger kids in their studies. For my Personal Development I learned more about my Russian culture by studying and practicing the language. From my experiences, I also learned about certain traditions and customs of the Russian culture. I was engaged in swimming and waterpolo, preparing for my military future as well. By setting Physical Fitness goals, I could track my progress and reach for new limits. I spent outside time in running and lifting so that I could further push my mind and body. I went out of my comfort zone for my Expedition by staying on a farm, helping out with building fences, planting bushes, and feeding livestock. I learned the value of teamwork in getting a job done efficiently, as well as using communication for effective results. I developed my confidence and resilience in entering new stages of life, as well as making it my goal to help people every day.

**Vivian Marsters**

*Frontenac, Missouri*

*Advisor: Amy Gassel*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold medal, I completed 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at Kids Camp Ladue, World Bird Sanctuary, and my local library. What I gained most from volunteering, was the ability to effectively and simultaneously lead and work with others to achieve the task at hand. To complete my Personal Development goals, I learned about my family's native language and culture by attending weekly tutoring lessons: and utilized these learned skills at home. For my Physical Fitness portion, I attended dance classes every week. I achieved a lot of flexibility with consistency and confidence from performing on stage and dancing in lead. Last but not least, for my Expedition I explored the rural lifestyle of farming. I was so lucky to harvest raw honey, understanding the true importance of nature and the hard work required to create the everyday products we consume. I had a memorable and life-changing experience in achieving not only my goals in the Congressional Award, but playing a role in making my community a better place.

---

**Caitlin Souers**

*Saint Louis, Missouri*

*Advisor: Mary Walsh*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service with the Lewis & Clark Fife and Drum Corps. I helped pass on the fife and drum tradition to many young recruits, and honored our veterans at many performances. For Personal Development I took Irish Flute lessons and practiced learning different types of tunes. My technique and sound showed great improvement. For Physical Fitness, I learned to Irish dance again after a devastating foot injury. I attained a higher level of dances than I ever have before. For my Exploration, I planned a 2-week trip to Ireland to explore my heritage and attend a week-long Irish music school. I saw many famous landmarks, but I also stayed in a hostel, learned to manage money, do my laundry, and completely take care of myself. Earning the Congressional Award has been an amazing experience that has made me a better leader, and prepared me for life.

**Divya Srihari**

*Chesterfield, Missouri*

*Advisor: Mrs. Laura Fogarty*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross*

Working towards my Voluntary Public Service goal, I was able to give back to my community by volunteering at a pediatric hospital and the American Red Cross. I also created a nonprofit to raise awareness among children about healthy eating and obesity. For my Personal Development goal, I elected to pursue biomedical research to explore a career as a scientist. As I challenged myself for the Physical Fitness goal, I took Indian classical dance lessons and progressed from an intermediate to an advanced level. For my Exploration goal, I planned a trip to Madras, India, where I explored the roots of Christianity by visiting ancient and historic churches. My journey towards the Congressional Award Gold Medal has been an exceptional experience – one of personal growth and self-realization; as I look back at this incredible journey, I have no doubt that these experiences will continue to inspire me in all my future endeavors.

---

**Yijin Huang**

*Chesterfield, Missouri*

*Advisor: Zhaowei Jin*

For my Voluntary Public Service I worked to improve animal welfare and led fund raising activities for animal charity organizations. I led scouts to build two memorial benches for the World Bird Sanctuary and also organized many service events for Open Space Council. I also volunteered in the NCADA to raise the awareness of drug abuse. For Personal Development I learned and achieved a high level of understanding in the programming languages of Java, C++, web development, App development and Web development. I also attended ACT training program to improve my ACT scores. For Physical Fitness I improved my basketball skill in order to play on the Marquette freshman basketball team. I increased my speed/endurance in order to run a 5 kilometer race in under 20 minutes. I have also increased my strength in the bench press, deadlift and squat. For my Expedition I hiked a 77 mile trek in 12 days in the Rocky mountains as a part of the Troop 677 boyscout screw at Philmont Scout Ranch. In my participation in the Congressional Award, I have realized that achievements come from internal drive and persistence.

**Olivia Johanns**

*Jefferson City, Missouri*

*Advisor: Debbie Malzner*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, National Honor Society, YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I served over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the local Salvation Army, American Red Cross, leading youth retreats, and helping provide holiday meals for federal housing. I was able to provide nourishment and company to a secluded group of people within our community. For Personal Development, I worked in two restaurants to increase my knowledge of business, customer service, and management. I found that empowering employees provides a successful business, and that any kind of experience develops a person. For my Physical Fitness portion, I developed my basketball skills to the point that I became a Division I prospect. I also worked to increase my free throw percentage over 80%. For my Expedition I traveled to Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Holland, France, and Luxembourg to enrich my cultural knowledge. I became more culturally competent which will help me in all of my endeavors. The Congressional Award taught me that outside of my comfort zones are where discovery, knowledge, compassion, and experience begin.

---

**Abbey Grooms**

*Saint Joseph, Missouri*

*Advisor: Jim Clayton*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To earn the Gold Medal I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service growing and selling sweet corn to raise money for scholarships for students with special needs to attend summer camp. I also planted a garden each summer to raise produce to donate to the local food bank—over 2,000 pounds. For Personal Development I spent over 200 hours job shadowing and volunteering with organizations that provide services for children and adults with special needs. I also spent a week out of state working at a facility for adults with special needs. For my Physical Fitness portion I swam after school and on weekends as part of a private swim team in addition to my school swim team. I achieved my goal of swimming on the varsity and state swim teams. Finally, for my Expedition I spent 5 days in Colorado mountain climbing, hiking, bike riding, touring historical mining towns, and more. The Congressional Award encouraged me to find a variety of ways to enrich my high school experience. I learned valuable lessons from all four areas.

**Ambrose Terneus**

*Bellevue, Nebraska*

*Advisor: Rodney Wheeler*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, Boy Scouts of America*

To complete the Gold Medal, I dedicated hundreds of Voluntary Public Service hours to playing classical piano and accordion for nursing home residents, serving community meals for the homeless, and tutoring children in mathematics and the Latin language. To further my Personal Development, I began studying computer programming and participated in a robotics team as its programmer. Additionally, I participated in the National Junior Classical League where I strengthened my knowledge of the Classics while competing with a Latin quiz-bowl team. For Physical Fitness, I trained with a track and field club as a decathlete and became ranked as the USATF Junior Olympic state decathlon champion in my division. I also trained and competed with a homeschool archery team in state tournaments. Lastly, I traveled to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico for my Expedition. I backpacked and achieved two peak ascents. During the trip, I experienced the history of the pioneers' travail in this rugged region. I am very grateful for these enriching opportunities fostered by the Congressional Award Program to grow in confidence, leadership, and virtue.



---

**Mary Aumen**  
*Omaha, Nebraska*  
*Advisor: Sheila Keller*

In earning my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I spent over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service serving our community in various ways. I helped serve the poor through our local St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, volunteered weekly at the library, and participated in educational outreach at the Fontenelle Forest Preserve. For Personal Development I studied the piano and participated in several choirs. In striving to strike a balance between beauty in the mind and the beauty of created life, I also spent more time at Fontenelle Forest, learning about plant and animal life and the splendor of nature. To improve my Physical Fitness, I hiked, played volleyball, ice skated, and learned ballroom dance. I increased my skill and endurance levels playing varsity volleyball, hiked through different parts of Africa, Europe and Asia, and acquired new skills in ice skating and dance. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to the Jane Austen Festival in Bath, England. We visited the places that were important to Miss Austen's life, and explored museums which showed what life was like in her time. We also viewed the Magna Carta. The Congressional Award Program has taught me many important life skills and instilled in me qualities which made me a more responsible and capable citizen of the United States.

**Zachary Hammer**  
*Henderson, Nevada*  
*Advisor: Murat Ozdemir*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society, YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at my local hospital and various organizations within the community. I interacted with doctors, nurses, and patients, learning the importance of compassion while coming to the realization that I want to become a Physician. For Personal Development, I took several SAT and ACT Prep Courses, and studied on my own. I achieved the scores I was looking for with a 1510 on the SAT and a 35 on the ACT. For Physical Fitness, I decided I would train hard at basketball so I could make the Varsity Basketball team. I made the Varsity team as a freshman, and continued through my senior year, where I made the All-Conference First Team. For my Exploration, I planned a four-night diving trip to Cozumel, Mexico to earn my Advanced Scuba Certification. I completed several dives, classwork, embraced the Mexican culture, and sharpened my Spanish speaking skills all while earning my certification. The Congressional Award has enhanced my life by taking me out of my comfort zone and exposing me to experiences I may have never had.

---

**Ritvik Janamsetty**

*Henderson, Nevada*

*Advisor: Ismail Kocabiyik*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service at my local library and started a free tutoring service. I also worked with my local NSF chapter to educate Indian students. Finally, I did a service project in India where I taught disadvantaged Indians English and life outside their community. Through my Personal Development goals, I sought to improve my self as a speaker, writer, and scientist. I did the first by participating in Speech and Debate, while I did the second by reading books and writing essays. I also I set to create a cleaner, more efficient biomass stove. For my Physical Fitness goal, I sought to decrease my weight to a much healthier 180 pounds. While I wasn't able to fulfill my goal, I still lost nearly 55 pounds and have noticed a myriad of personal health, physical, and athletic improvements. My Expedition took me to a culturally significant city in India: Hyderabad. There, I learned about the rich, centuries-old history of the city—filled with religious, cultural, and linguistic strife and harmony—with a backdrop of a city undergoing a technological and political revolution. The Congressional Award was pivotal in me discovering myself, both personally and societally, by helping me learn more about myself and my role in the world.

**Salomé Levy**

*Henderson, Nevada*

*Advisor: Zharina Flores*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I wanted to focus on giving every student a right to an equitable education. Throughout my two years of Voluntary Public Service I volunteered at the Green Valley public library and not only assisted the homework program but heard input on education. I also helped organize Las Vegas Dance Marathon for children hospital. For my Personal Development I focused on improving my art skills and learning how to drive. I want my work to one day be seen my thousands in an art gallery in my community. I learned from local artists how to expand my current painting skills with oil paint and studied the composition of oceans. For my Physical Fitness, I focused on my strength. My dad inspired me to lift weights to years ago and I started to deadlift 60 lbs and worked my way up by increasing 10 lbs every week. While I focused on improving my weightlifting ability, I learned about foods that give good carbs and protein. For my Exploration I traveled to the Eastern Coast of the United States, as it was far from Las Vegas and out of my comfort zone. I visited New York City and Washington DC to learn about new environments and the different cultures which later inspired me to major in international relations. My experience earning the Congressional Award was my journey. It was not a straight path and it took me hard work and dedication to reach my goals.

---

**Zane Pasha**

*Las Vegas, Nevada*

*Advisor: Rita Vaswani*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National Honor Society*

My sister and I are co-founders of our own non-profit organization, “AIM OutReach Foundation”, through which I organized annual food drives, coat drives and mentorship programs. I am also a member of YMSL where I volunteered at Catholic Charities, Rescue Mission, JOY Prom and Miracle League. For my Personal Development, I played violin daily for at least 60 minutes with my goal being to play with orchestras in venues of repute. I reached my goal by getting accepted to play with an orchestra at Carnegie Hall and at the Sydney Opera House in Australia. For my Physical Fitness, I set a goal to improve my skills at Olympic Recurve Archery by regular practice, focus and to develop my mental strength, which is so vital for this sport. I continued my weekly practice and lessons and as of now, my average score has improved by 50 points. Finally, For my Expedition, I planned a trip with my English teacher to visit South Africa and visited Johannesburg and Cape Town to see in person the township where Nelson Mandela lived, what inspired him, where he was imprisoned, both for the initial house arrest and then in Robben Island. The Congressional Award taught me perseverance, diligence, follow through and respect for all the personal liberties that we take for granted. It got me out of my comfort zone and encouraged me to try different outreach experiences.

**Sydney Richardson**

*Bedford, New Hampshire*

*Advisor: Scott Lucid*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the Boys and Girls Club in Lawrence, Massachusetts, an underserved community. I coached the swim team and taught swim lessons. I also ran a swim suit drive to make sure those who wanted to learn had proper swim attire. We collected over 250 suits. For Personal Development, I picked up crew and archery. For crew I joined the high school team, and learned the skills necessary to make the varsity team. For archery I joined Stonedale Archery and earned multiple pins, while becoming a Level 1 Certified instructor. For my Physical Fitness I wanted to improve my 100 and 200 Butterfly and 100 Freestyle. Through improved technique and interval training, I improved all three and got my 100 Freestyle under one minute. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned an immersion trip to Peru. I went on an excursion to the dunes of Ica, got over my fear of small planes to fly over the Nazca lines, lived with a local family, and attended a school, all while improving my Spanish. The Congressional Award was an amazing experience, as it pushed me outside my comfort zone and shaped me into a well-rounded person, and I am thrilled to have completed it.

---

**Zachary Asselta**

*Millville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Lisa Gaudio*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered with the local library, Historical Society, and our local Levoy Theater. While helping at these places, I organized files, sold concessions, and helped patrons find what they were looking for. To complete my Personal Development goals, I have worked on my marching band skills. I have improved my marching and playing skills by practicing multiple times a week. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I practiced every day and worked to achieve faster times running both in the mile and in 5k's. To complete my Exploration goals I traveled to Las Vegas and the surrounding areas. On this trip I learned a great amount of information about the area, culture, and history that particular area and of the country. While participating in The Congressional Award I have learned many new skills and have learned to push myself past what I thought were the limits.

**Robert Cuff**

*Millville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Lisa Gaudio*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 600 hours of Voluntary Public Service at my local community theater. I was an usher and concessions worker at the Levoy Theater and I supervised campers as a Junior Counselor for the New Jersey National Guard Youth Camp. For Personal Development, I wanted to improve my singing abilities to audition for the New Jersey All-State Chorus. I improved my vocal ability and made great strides in my time practicing. I auditioned and was accepted into the New Jersey All-State Chorus. For my Physical Fitness portion, I decided I would improve my endurance, strength and agility in Cross Country and Winter/Spring Track. I trained and by the end of the year, I earned three varsity letters in those sports. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a five night trip to Williamsburg, Virginia. While exploring historical Jamestown and Yorktown, I learned to paddle board! I physically and mentally challenged myself while white water rafting and hiking. The Congressional Award has made a huge impact on my life that is unforgettable, I will never forget to always persevere through even the most difficult of tasks.

---

**Evan Gregory Doliszny**

*Ocean City, New Jersey*

*Advisor: William Bratun*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society, People to People International*

In earning my Gold Medal, I completed over 611 hours of Volunteer Public Service which strengthened my work ethic, compassion for those in need, and a greater appreciation for a clean and sustainable environment while servicing the public for the greater good. In pursuing my Personal Development goals, I invested over 1,148 hours developing advanced mathematical, logic, analytical and reading comprehension skills, all which were instrumental to my success in the pursuit of academic excellence and top performance on my SAT. My Physical Fitness goals were completed with over 1,040 hours over a 2 year period dedicated to the team sport of crew. I increased my physical strength, coordination, stamina, and reduced my 2k sprint time from 8:30 down to a 7:20, and qualified to compete in regional and national races. For my Expedition, I developed a strong interest in exploring Middle Eastern traditions, culture, history, and a desire to strengthen my language proficiency in Arabic through Arabic immersion. I realized my goals by travelling to Amman Jordan. With focused dedication, I learned that hard work, effective teamwork and committed determination leads to success, and I intend to continue to apply these traits in pursuit of my future self-improvement/development goals.

**Alexandra Kukal**

*Millville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Lisa Gaudio*

I volunteered in my community by promoting our local arts through our community theater and through our historic glass factory. I also volunteered at our local WWII Army Airfield to promote history in the community. For Personal Development I strived to become a better flute player. I put countless hours toward practicing and joined my high school marching band. For Physical Fitness I ran and swam daily to become a better athlete and increase my stamina. For my Expedition I traveled to Maine. Overall the Congressional Award broadened my horizons making me a better person by allowing me to help my community and better myself.

---

**James Joseph Laberee**  
*Medford, New Jersey*  
*Advisor: Rebecca Nugent*

It has been a great pleasure to spend my Voluntary Public Service at the oldest natural science institution in the Western Hemisphere - The Academy of Natural Sciences. For three years I have helped young students learn about the natural world. I will continue this rewarding work throughout my high school years. For my Personal Development I learned how to play the bagpipes, which helped me connect with my Scottish heritage. I take lessons and also march in parades. This is a proud instrument with a distinct patriotic appeal. For my Physical Fitness I joined South Jersey Rowing Club and rowed on the Cooper River. This sport taught me more about life than I every imagined possible. It is a true team sport. Through heat, rain, and cold I rowed and competed in an eight-person shell and gained a very high level of fitness and endurance. I spent my Expedition learning about the Amish culture in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. I pitched a tent in a nearby campground and visited historical Amish sites daily. I was able to interview people directly and interact on a limited basis with some Amish youth. I gained respect for this lifestyle! The Congressional Award Program has taught me how to stick with a goal and finish strong!

**Krishna Parikh**  
*Toms River, New Jersey*  
*Advisor: Heather Handzo*

For my Voluntary Public Service I went to the hospital and nursing home often. In both places, I helped out individuals, whether they were visitors, patients, or elders. I also am one of the volunteers of my Indian community's annual 5k color run. For Personal Development I went to dance classes at Satrangi School of Fusion in Edison, NJ. By continuously practicing routines and preparing for multiple shows, I have gained more self-confidence and learned how to control my body better, coordinate with others, and increase my endurance. For Physical Fitness I practiced tennis outside of school most of the year, preparing to play on my high school's JV team the past two years. My practice and commitment helped increase my velocity over the last two teens seasons, which in turn made me better overall. I also developed a greater level of stamina. For my Expedition I planned a trip to London and Paris as part of a group. We put together an agenda by going on various websites, where we booked plane tickets, hotels, and tickets for all the sites we were seeing. I expanded my leadership skills as one of the head coordinators. The Congressional Award encouraged me to be involved in my community, allowing me to make a greater impact than before.

---

**Khushi Patel**

*Toms River, New Jersey*  
*Advisor: Heather Handzo*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals I partook in hours at Rose Garden Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. At the center I specifically assisted the elderly with a cooking class. For my Personal Development goals I worked on my soccer skills and techniques. I did three days of practice on my soccer team and then one to two days of soccer games over the weekends. I grew as a person being that I worked on my technical skills as well as teamwork. For my Physical Fitness goals I went to the gym and I worked on increasing my endurance. I grew physically and mentally strong from this goal of mine. In order to fulfill my Exploration goals I chose my trip to Japan and China. On this trip I learned about two unique cultures that I have never experienced before. My overall experience for earning this prestigious award is that I feel as if i have made a true difference in my community and in myself. I was able to grow as a person and truly learn more about my community.

**Shannon Leahy**

*Neptune, New Jersey*  
*Advisor: Brigit Albrecht*

For my Voluntary Public Service I was a counselor at Camp Invention, a non-profit organization who inspire children to be future innovators through science. I also volunteered my time at a local hospital and I organized a Halloween Costume Drive for families residing at a homeless shelter collecting over 300 costumes. For Personal Development I worked at a local ice cream shop. I have been with the store since it opened over 4 years growing in my role by taking on additional job responsibilities. I started out as an ice cream scooper, was promoted to a shift leader and last summer I was promoted to store manager. For Physical Fitness I decided to improve my skills as a dancer. I increased my studio time in order to improve my technique. Through my commitment and hard work I was awarded a solo on my competition team and currently I am a member of the Loyola University Dance Team. For my Expedition Trip I planned a camping trip to Cape May, NJ. I coordinated 6 families, researched campsites, planned day trips and organized daily meals for everyone. I learned the proper way to set up a base camp, went biking and visited the Cape May Bird Observatory. The Congressional Award has taught me the importance of setting goals, to always follow through with commitments and that it takes hard work to achieve great success.

---

**Julia Jeong**

*Paramus, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Yu Jeong Lee*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, aiding the elderly in the long term care center, as well as serving at nursing homes through the musical performances of the Good Neighbor Ensemble in which I participated. For Personal Development I sought to develop my skills as a violinist through practicing regularly, learning from a teacher, and joining music organizations such as the NJ Region I Orchestra, NJ All-State Orchestra, and even the All-Eastern Orchestra. For Physical Fitness I attended my local health center for at least 3 hours a week to maintain my goal of staying fit. I was able to build up endurance, running for longer periods of time, and even build a better metabolism. On my Expedition I visited many major historic sites in Korea to understand the history of my culture and heritage.

**Ciara DiMaiolo**

*Morganville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Doug Young*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at The Solana of Marlboro and Robertsville Volunteer Fire Company. At the Solana of Marlboro I assisted with activities and social gatherings. At my local fire house, I went on numerous types of calls and participated in drills. For Personal Development, my goal was to become a stronger vocalist. I wanted to expand my knowledge in musical theatre, opera, technique, solfege, and sight singing. I also spent a lot of time learning to act through the songs I sing. For my Physical Fitness portion, my first goal was to strengthen my training in dance to help me become a stronger performer. My second goal was to enhance my skills in circus training. Both of these goals helped my to become more flexible, graceful and a better performer. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a five-day hiking trip in Hickory Run State Park, located in Pennsylvania. I hiked physically demanding trails in the park for 15 miles a day. I wanted to do something I never thought I could do that would be personally challenging and fun at the same time. The Congressional Award was a life changing experience that taught me independence, responsibility, selflessness and enabled me to grow as a person and discover so many wonderful things.



---

**Kunal Kanwar**

*Edison, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Archana Sood*

*Affiliations: HOBY, Key Club*

For the Voluntary Public Service portion of the Congressional Award, I decided to co-found a non-profit organization called *Must Educate*. The organization strives to provide unprivileged children with the resources needed to receive an education. Together, we have raised over \$7000. For my Personal Development goals, I participated in FIRST Robotics which is an international organization for high school students that incorporates teamwork, leadership skills, engineering design, and presentational skills focused on building robots. For the Physical Fitness portion, I joined the varsity golf team in my high school and the Junior PGA for New Jersey. As a pivotal member on the team, I received the Most Improved Player Award during the 2016-2017 Varsity Golf season, and qualified for the Greater Middlesex County Golf Finals. For the Expedition, I organized and planned a 5-day trip to a camping ground in Pennsylvania for my family and over 25 other friends. During the expedition, I was able to go white water rafting and had the unique opportunity to visit two state parks while learning basic camping skills. Overall, the Congressional Award was a unique experience which allowed me to not only excel in four different life areas but changed my perspective on what it means to get involved and make a difference in the lives of others.

**Tanvi Bekal**

*Bridgewater, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Eve Wasserman*

*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by volunteering at a Habitat for Humanity ReStore. I collected, priced, and stocked donated items; profits from selling these items are used to procure supplies and build homes for those in need. My Personal Development requirement was fulfilled through participating in a leadership program in my community. It entailed discussing issues with community leaders and learning about the roles that different components of my county play in solving problems that the community faces. For the Physical Fitness portion of the program, I played volleyball at my school for four years and attended camps to hone my skills. This allowed me to transform from a novice to a lover of the sport, and inspired me to continue to pursue my passion in college. My Expedition included travelling to Louisiana and Texas for a cultural and historical immersive experience. I learned about the French colonization in Louisiana, and visited the JFK Museum in Dallas to learn more about our country's history. Overall, the Congressional Award was an opportunity that allowed me to broaden my horizons and encouraged me to explore activities and ideas that I would not otherwise have been exposed to, giving me newfound passions that I am thankful for.

---

**James Foran**

*Stewartville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Robert Marciello*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America*

As an Eagle Scout, I felt it was my duty to give back to the program that had offered me so much. In order to do so, I had continued my service to Scouting through its National Honor Society: the Order of the Arrow. I was awarded the Vigil Honor through my service as Lodge Chief and an Arrowman. My Personal Development revolved around fine tuning my leadership abilities to prepare myself for my career in the United States Air Force. I was the captain of both my Cross Country and Swim teams and served in many extracurricular clubs. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my 100 yard and 50 yard freestyle times in swimming. I dropped significant time through hard work and enthusiasm. I was commonly known as the loudest and proudest swimmer on my team and I worked hard with countless hours of swimming during my time. Outward Bound was where I had done my Exploration requirement. As an experienced Scout, I thought I was well prepared for the 22 day expedition. Frustrations and difficulty with my fellow crew members taught me the importance of compassion and understanding in high stress situations.

**Eunice Bae**

*Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Kevin Jong*

For my Voluntary Public Service I worked the reference desk of my local library weekly, built homes for homeless veterans through Habitat for Humanity, and restored a public park far from home with the Student Conservation Association. Through these experiences, I was able to interact with those I helped. Language is a strong passion of mine, so I decided to learn Italian through an online college course for my Personal Development. I also worked on improving my piano skills through individual practice. For my Physical Fitness I participated in the varsity fencing and softball teams at my school. I practiced, competed and strove to become a leader on both teams. I also went to batting cages on my own time in order to improve my batting. I planned a 5-day Expedition around Korea in order to become better-connected with my roots. As a Korean-American, I wanted to have a more profound knowledge of my familial and cultural history.

---

**Vicky Trieu**

*Secaucus, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Catharina Sofjan Wolf*

*Affiliations: Key Club, National Honor Society, People to People International*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service through People to People International and the Hygiene Project. I distributed hygiene kits and served meals at shelters. For Personal Development, I worked on developing interpersonal skills to become an effective leader. I served as the President of People to People International GIFT Community Chapter and the National French Honor Society. The leadership experience enabled me to become a confident public speaker. Dance is one of my greatest passions. For Physical Fitness, I participated in daily dance classes embedded in my school schedule, along with after school rehearsals in ballet, pointe, tap, and contemporary. I attended summer intensives and dance festivals. I also performed in charity showcases. After completing my second year taking French, I wanted to explore the culture first-hand. For my Expedition I traveled to Europe for the first time and spent six days visiting museums, eating delicious foods, and admiring the famous sights. I had the opportunities to utilize and improve my French language skills. My participation in earning the Congressional Award has enabled me to grow personally and professionally by allowing me to gain a new perspective on life and develop skills to help prepare me for a future career as a successful educator.

**Caitlin D'Souza**

*Denville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Nicholas Pelosi*

My Voluntary Public Service was at my local hospital. I helped deliver specimens or transport patients around the hospital. I spent my summers volunteering with my church through Operation Appalachia to rebuild houses in Preston County, West Virginia. For Personal Development, I wanted to become a better flutist so everyday I would practice scales and breathing techniques. Now I can play complex pieces more fluidly. For Physical Fitness I wanted to decrease my mile time to 7 minutes so I would run on the treadmill and lift weights. I incorporated high intensity sprints with jogging in order to build my endurance. I am very passionate about fitness and love going to the gym now. I planned a trip for my family and I to go to California for my Expedition. We observed the Hispanic culture in Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco by going to authentic restaurants, museums, and shows. I even got to practice my Spanish skills! By participating in the Congressional Award, I was able to grow as an individual by participating in my community and gaining more exposure to other cultures.

---

**Krishant Putrevu**

*Parsippany, NJ, New Jersey  
Advisor: Lawrence Hart*

For Voluntary Public Service I volunteered at St. Clare's hospital as youth volunteer. I assisted with transportation and front desk. During that time I made new friends, worked as team and enjoyed the satisfaction of helping others. For Personal Development I took violin lessons two times a week and practiced at home. I am now in the final level of symphony orchestra. For Physical Fitness, I took tennis classes and trained by jogging and weight machines at gym. Finally for my Exploration, I planned a five days trip to explore ancient moverian culture and early settlers of North Carolina. The Congressional award program has taught me hard work, dedication, perseverance and helping others.

**Andre Biehl**

*Princeton, New Jersey  
Advisor: Janet Monge*

The Amazon rainforest is being rapidly deforested and my goal was to help protect it and to empower communities living within it. For my Voluntary Public Service I worked with a science-based NGO monitoring deforestation and I conducted outreach activities to support sustainable development for a vulnerable Amazonian community. For my Personal Development I developed interviewing and journalistic skills. Focusing on the history of migrant labor in the US, I conducted interviews with migrant farmworkers in New Jersey and wrote reports, stories, and blog posts. Having the chance to interview farmworker activist Dolores Huerta was a powerful experience. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my strength and overall health. I weightlifted at a higher level, introduced more cardio into my fitness regimen, and ate a more nutrient-rich diet to enhance my workouts. I saw unexpected positive side effects from my program, including a lack of illness and improved sleep. For my Expedition I explored my family history and the history of 19th century southern Brazil, particularly as it relates to immigration. I visited historical sites and local cemeteries. I combed through parish registries and tombstone inscriptions for data about the baptisms, marriages and deaths of my ancestors. Through The Congressional Award, I developed a set of passions and practical skills that I will take into a lifelong career of public service and civic engagement.

---

**Anushka Iyer**

*West Windsor, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Harini Fredrickson*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by starting and mentoring two robotics teams (one local and one abroad), hosting outreach events and giving presentations on the importance of STEM education, and teaching programming classes at local schools. For Personal Development, I learned how to make nutritious and healthy meals, prepare and pack my food ahead of time, shop for groceries, and read nutrition labels. I also researched and prepared pre and post workout meals to meet my needs during my volleyball season. My goal for the Physical Fitness portion was to lead my school's varsity volleyball team and be a well-rounded player who could play all positions, while also building muscle strength and tone. I attended all volleyball practices and trained extra with my coach and teammates to expand my skillset. For my Expedition I planned a five day trip to India, inspired by one of my favorite movies, which tracks the life and exploits of a warrior, Bajirao Ballal from Pune, India. My family and I visited famous sights from the movie, met with professors who had studied Ballal, and explored parts of India we had never been to! Participating in the congressional award has been both motivating and motivating. It has helped me hone in on my specific interests while also allowing me to share them with my community. Through this journey, I have become more self-sufficient, a better leader, and a better planner.

**David Takacs**

*Lawrenceville, New Jersey*

*Advisor: Steve Hancock*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

My Gold Medal journey spanned ten years and my activities varied over the years. My Voluntary Public Service revolved around scouting, rising to the level of Assistant ScoutMaster. My Personal Development involved leadership courses and activities. For Physical Fitness, I engaged in different physical challenges and joined a local rowing team. Finally, for my Expedition I planned a five-night Historical Markers quest. Visiting towns across the State of Pennsylvania locating Markers, I learned the historical significance for their placement and immersed myself in each town's unique history. The Congressional Award has taught me to reach beyond my comfort zone and learn a valuable lesson in perseverance.

---

**Saiomkar Iyer**

*Wheatley Heights, New York*

*Advisor: Sushama Tangella*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I taught Martial Arts to children for free as well as made food for the homeless. I also spent my time volunteering at a hospital for children who are wheelchair bound and cannot speak. For the Personal Development aspect, I regularly attended Human Value classes that helped me appreciate the world more. I also worked hard to significantly increase my skill in playing drums. For Physical Fitness I began lifting weights in hopes to lose weight and gain muscle. I also trained diligently to obtain my First Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. For my Exploration I went to New York City and explored many different areas full of culture, great food and beautiful museums and architecture. Overall the Congressional award has helped me grow and appreciate the small things given in life that no one should take for granted.

**Noah Stiles**

*East Islip, New York*

*Advisor: Judith Daley*

For my Voluntary Public Service I held various drives to help the disadvantaged in my community. I did coat drives and also suit and dress drives for working people. I also did a towel and sheet drive and donated them to a local animal shelter. Finally, I worked with local special education children. For Personal Development I worked for a local rental company and learned all aspects of the business. I learned how to take orders, follow through with the orders and also create satisfied customers. I observed how to negotiate with people so that everyone is happy with the deal. For Physical Fitness I played on a travel soccer team and then learned ji jitsu and kickboxing. Physical activity is a lot of fun and helps me to keep in shape. For my Expedition I planned a trip to Mexico for my entire family. We went to the ruins there and swam in beautiful caves. I am confident that I can plan additional adventures in the future. I enjoyed earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal. I learned a lot in order to obtain it and acquired skills I will use for the rest of my life!

---

**Muhammed Colak**  
*Commack, New York*  
*Advisor: Emirhan Yenidunya*

For Voluntary Public Services I helped out set up dialogue dinners with my community. I also helped out organize international trips to Haiti and Tanzania. I volunteered in teaching kids English in Haiti and volunteered in renovating an orphanage in Tanzania. To achieve my Personal Development goals, I helped out kids in elementary school in reading and writing. I also went to a 1-month mentoring camp and seminars to help out kids who are in high school who are planning on going to college. To achieve my Physical Fitness goals, I set up 90-minute soccer games every week with my friends and mentors. I also trained every day in my front yard until I felt pain in my body and continued playing so I could learn not to quit so easily. For my Exploration goal, my friend set up a trip to Turkey and learn about our culture. We also made this trip to learn how to stand on our own feet. The overall experience in earning The Congressional award was one of the best things, it thought me so much and made me gain a lot of knowledge that I will later use in my life. It also helped me open up my eyes and see things in different perspectives. I recommend everybody to experience this award.

**Becky Han**  
*Port Washington, New York*  
*Advisor: Myeong Suk Chae*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 470 hours of Voluntary Public Service through my own non-profit dedicated to helping elementary school adoptees. I also worked as a part of an organization affiliated with the UN by serving homeless individuals food and actively fundraising for their cause. For my Personal Development portion, I improved my research skills in business by working alongside a mentor to create a methodology measuring the social impact of the online education industry. In addition, I advanced my skills in video editing and producing alongside my church's multimedia editor. For Physical Fitness, I trained to hike a 2-mile trail and, ultimately, longer trails under the average time by following strict workout routines. Lastly, for my Expedition, I planned and led a four-night, five-day camping trip at Wildwood State Park. I obtained and organized the necessary supplies, as well as arranged all activities, which included biking nearby trails and hiking in areas near the beach. The Congressional Award was an incredible, unique experience that truly helped me grow both as an independent person and as a confident leader. All of the hours I put into reaching each of my goals enabled me not only to discover my passions, but also to develop my overall endurance and diligence when fulfilling any kind of responsibility.

---

**Darshi Shah**

*Rego Park, New York*

*Advisor: Dr. Ilija Dukovski*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public service at the Emergency Department in the Greater Boston area, serving patients from myriad of socio-economic, linguistic, cultural, and medical background. For Personal Development, I conducted cancer biology research, both in wet laboratory settings and using computational tools, and have immensely enhanced my knowledge in the field, further inspiring me to become an Oncologist in the future. In the Physical Fitness area, I worked my on running and lifting skills to improve my core strength, to be able to better serve as an EMT-B. For my Expedition, I planned 7 days and 6 nights trip while I was in India to explore Vadodara, the city I was born in, and immerse in the culture by living like locals. Working towards the Congressional Award helped me enhance my planning and time management skills, become more diligent about my goals, and helped me realize the power of persistence and self-belief.

**Baird Johnson**

*New York, New York*

*Advisor: Jay Peterson*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

My Voluntary Public Service mission was to make the concrete jungle a little greener. I worked in numerous community gardens; my favorite was Jenny's Garden where we planted, irrigated and harvested hundreds of pounds of vegetables to donate to local soup kitchens. New York City is also the perfect setting to embark on a self study of the works of William Shakespeare. For my Personal Development I explored 25 plays - attending staged readings, professional theatrical productions, watching televised and film versions as well reading his works - all for free! For Physical Fitness I logged 993 hours and ran thousands of miles. This program inspired me to expand my efforts in cross training which is a major benefit to my running. Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks were the setting for my Expedition. I camped, hiked, photographed nature and investigated the effects of global warming on the ecosystem.



---

**Kristen Brennan**

*Staten Island, New York*

*Advisor: Robert Gullickson*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, The Maverick Foundation*

For my Voluntary Public Service I attended clinics at Saint Teresa's Youth Program, teaching and coaching elementary school girls basketball. I was the book and score keeper at Mount Carmel after CYO basketball league. I volunteered before and after school hours, helping my classmates with homework and studying. For Personal Development, I took art classes twice a week to improve my drawing and painting skills. As Student Council President, I organize events in my school and strive to discuss ways to make everyday life for my colleagues better. For Physical Fitness I played on my High School varsity softball team, where we won the 2017 NYS Championship. I practiced 5-6 days a week, as well as played league games to improve my skills and strive for another Championship. I went to Virginia for my Expedition. I wanted to learn more about my country's history by visiting museums, parks and battlefields in the area. I also wanted to expand my knowledge about aquatic life by visiting aquariums. Earning the Congressional Award has kick started my development into a young adult. The skills I've learned such as; time management, work ethic and community involvement are ones I will use throughout the rest of my life.

**Madison Rose Gorman**

*Staten Island, New York*

*Advisor: Robert Gullickson*

*Affiliations: The Maverick Foundation*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service, including hours at the Seton Foundation for Learning. This volunteer experience was rewarding because I worked closely with young children with developmental disabilities, helping them to master skills such as communicating and playing cooperatively to help them succeed throughout their young lives and beyond. Bringing a warm smile to their face and brightening their day was especially meaningful. For Personal Development, I earned a Lifeguard and CPR certification and am now a Lifeguard for three years. I also stretched myself by participating in high school theatrical productions and serving as a lawyer for the Prosecution as part of the Mock Trial team. For my Physical Fitness requirements, I committed to training and improving my swimming skills, ultimately becoming the Varsity Swim Team Captain for Saint Joseph Hill Academy High School. Finally, for my Expedition I planned a unique learning adventure and went snorkeling and scuba diving for the first time to learn more about the underwater habitat in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos. The Congressional Award was an experience that expanded my mind and challenged me personally, helping me to realize that hard work and stretch goals are possible and rewarding in reaching my highest potential. The experience has forever instilled in me the importance of voluntary public service, and I plan to continue volunteer work with developmentally disabled children throughout college and beyond. My aspirations are to study Business and Law, ultimately defending the innocent and bringing justice that is deserved to others. Through the Congressional Award program, I learned that young adults can be the heroes of everyday life and have a lasting impact on others.

---

**Tasneem Ibrahim**  
*Brooklyn, New York*  
*Advisor: Nehal Elfeky*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service hours at my local volunteer ambulance service. As a volunteer, I learned First Aid skills such as CPR, bleeding control, measuring blood pressure and pulse. I also helped train new volunteers in these skills. For Personal Development I attended the Girls Who Code program at my school which took place every Tuesday after school. In the club, I was exposed to computer science, and learned about different coding languages. I was then able to apply this knowledge in coding to build games and websites. For Physical Fitness I dedicated more than 200 hours playing basketball. I constantly practiced in school and outside of school by competing against others. Through this practice, I was able to increase the shots I make in and my overall strength. For my Expedition I planned trips for my family to explore Washington DC and Virginia. I researched about various fun activities that my family would enjoy. Most important, I was able to organize the events of each day to make the trip run smoother. Through my participation in The Congressional Award, I learned that with dedication, anything is possible.

**Jacqueline McCabe**  
*Staten Island, New York*  
*Advisor: Vickie Bedore*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed 420 hours of Voluntary Public Service at the Staten Island Children's Museum and the Children's Harbor Montessori School. These experiences confirmed my career choice to work with young children. For Personal Development, I dedicated 440 hours to working with my tutor and my Hearing Education Specialist. Through these activities I was able to improve my focus and my grades. For my Physical Fitness portion, I competed in three different sports (volleyball, cheerleading and softball), one for each season, logging over 460 hours. In the process I was proud to receive the Coaches' Award for Volleyball and the Sportsmanship Award for Cheerleading. Finally, for my Expedition, I completed a summer learning program in Vermont. I lived with a roommate, did my own laundry, and learned how to be self-sufficient. The Congressional Award allowed me to combine my various individual interests into a larger and powerful long-term project.

---

**Hannah Nyquist**

Staten Island, New York

Advisor: Robert Gullickson

*Affiliations: The Maverick Foundation*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service as an assistant swim coach for the Blessed Sacrament Swim Team as well as the Staten Island Special Olympics. I also volunteered at Eger Nursing Home assisting the elderly with activities. For Personal Development, I was a lifeguard at different pool clubs on Staten Island and I was also part of the RUMC Teen Leadership Program where I was able to work with nurses and doctors in different areas throughout the hospital. This helped me decide to pursue my college career in a part of the medical field. For my Physical Fitness, I continued my competitive swimming throughout high school doing over 350 hours per year. This was a major part of receiving a swim scholarship to attend Southern Connecticut State University. Finally, for my Exploration portion, I travelled with my family and visited significant cultural areas and studied their history. The Congressional Award is an amazing accomplishment that I am extremely proud of. It has helped me to learn to put others before myself and to continue to strive and work hard towards the goals I have set for myself.

**Jacqueline Sutera**

Staten Island, New York

Advisor: Robert Gullickson

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, Special Olympics, The Maverick Foundation*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I participated in many charitable walks and held a special needs clinic for young children at Extreme Baseball and Softball Academy. I organized and ran the clinic in order to give all children an opportunity to learn and play a sport. For my Personal Development I worked at Extreme Baseball and Softball Academy in order to perfect my organizational skills so that I was well prepared for college. For Physical Fitness I was a member of the Notre Dame Academy Varsity Cheerleading Team. I perfected my tumbling and stunting skills during my four years on the team. I decided to take my Expedition to the state of Maryland. Since I have always had an interest in history and Maryland was one of the original thirteen colonies, I thought this would be the perfect trip for me. I focused on points of interest and the history of the state itself.

---

**Joseph Hong**

*New York, New York*

*Advisor: Faith Bekermus*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

Voluntary Public Service has been an integral part of my high school life. I went to missions trips to Mexico where I worked to construct and maintain a school, until moving back to the city where I was routinely involved in the Legal Aid Society Books for Kids program. At school I taught chess and skating. Personal Development has included a multitude of experiences that has helped me grow and develop hobbies along the way. I became an Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America and focused on music. After hurting my knee in middle school, Physical Fitness has been difficult for me. The activities I've done with the Congressional Award have helped me quite a bit. I worked on physical therapy, continued playing fencing and volleyball, and discovered a love of ice skating. For my Expedition I traveled overseas to England where I was able to learn about a country that was not my own, and find differences and similarities in all our aspects of life. While I may have done many of my activities independently, The Congressional Award allowed me to stay organized and pursue other goals in pursuit of balanced, individual growth.

**Henry Lin**

*Briarcliff Manor, New York*

*Advisor: Sue Huang*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at the Briarcliff Manor Public Library and Senior Living Apartment. I offered technological assistance for the residents, primarily pertaining to usage of mobile devices. For my Personal Development, I enrolled in extra classes at Stanford Online High School in addition to my traditional courses. Furthermore, I also conducted independent research in the field of computational linguistics with a mentor. This research was published at the ACL Melbourne 2018 SRW. For my Physical Fitness, I ran long distance with a personal running coach on various trails in my area. For my Expedition I traveled to Berlin and Vienna over the summer of 2017 to see various historical sites.

---

**Sophia Pao**

*Chappaqua, New York*

*Advisor: Anthony Rizzo*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

In earning my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service. As a Techno Chix robotics team member, I planned numerous STEM outreach events reaching over 1000 people. I also volunteered with the local ambulance corp. For Personal Development, I learned multiple programming languages. Later, I even taught other students how to program. For my Physical Fitness portion, I learned about yoga, golf, rowing and fencing. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five-night trip to Washington, D.C. The Congressional Award taught me to try new things and to set goals. Along the way, I had the opportunity to meet new people and to help my community.

**Blake Guzy**

*Cooperstown, New York*

*Advisor: Dr. Doug Gable*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service as an Eagle Scout and a Volunteer Fire Fighter with the Cooperstown Volunteer Fire Department. I also completed and passed a 2-week overnight training program at the State of New York Academy of Fire Science. For Personal Development, I set a goal of improving my Algebra II grade. I achieved this goal by working with my teacher during my lunch period 3 times a week. I also worked with a tutor outside of school and attended extra help sessions on the weekends and during school breaks. I set a Physical Fitness goal to lower my body fat to 9%, increase my muscle mass, and to decrease my mile time to 6 minutes. I accomplished this goal by working out and lifting weights 5 days a week for 2 hours each session. I also ran 3 times a week and altered my diet. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a week-long hiking and camping trip to the Grand Canyon with my Boy Scout Troop. We hiked over 15 miles each day on steep terrain. This expedition was the most challenging but the most amazing experience I have ever had and I am so thankful I did it. The Congressional Award was an enriching experience that taught me the importance of giving back through service and the value of setting personal goals and experiencing personal expeditions.

---

**Olivia Zhou**

*Albany, New York*

*Advisor: Andre O'Neil*

I completed over four hundred hours of Voluntary Public Service at the Albany Stratton VA Hospital and Albany Medical Center, two major hospitals in my area. Through volunteering at these two hospitals, I was able to aid in the treatment and care of patients, specifically veterans and children. The next part of my Gold Medal journey was improving my skills as a cello player for Personal Development. I have improved now both as a soloist and as a part of an ensemble. For Physical Fitness, I focused on honing my skills as a tennis player. I focused on increasing my accuracy and endurance, specifically for my serve, which was difficult for me because I had hurt my shoulder earlier. Through perseverance, I greatly improved my serving and general tennis performance. For the last part, I went to Hangzhou, China, for my Expedition. While there, I was able to improve my proficiency in Chinese and interact and learn more about the culture and country that my family is from. Through these activities, the Congressional Award helped me improve myself, taught me new skills, strengthened my perseverance, and allowed me to connect more with my family's culture.

**Grayson King**

*Raleigh, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Barbara Mulkey*

Through Voluntary Public Service I put my passion to serve others by volunteering more than 400 hours as a student athletic trainer, helping students reach leadership goals through the Shelton Leadership Center, and serving in hurricane recovery efforts for libraries in eastern North Carolina. My Personal Development goal was to build leadership and public speaking skills. I worked through the Shelton Leadership Challenge developing group leadership strategies and earning the role of Peer Leader, Master of Ceremonies, and Scholar. I also founded the Honors Service Club at my school. For my Physical Fitness I worked to improve my strength, endurance, and swim speed in 50-yard breaststroke and freestyle. I chose the same race for three seasons and improved my speed by an average of five percent per year. For my Expedition, I embarked on a six consecutive day trip to Heifer International Ranch where I worked as a ranch hand. This was a physical and psychological challenge as I learned to herd goats on horseback, test them for parasites, and prepare them to deliver to communities in need. The Congressional Award provided a invaluable framework, measurable milestones, and motivation to complete all the projects and activities I sought for the past several years.

---

**Garrett Gerdau**

*Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Stacy Payne*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America*

My Voluntary Public Service activities included making 3D-printed prosthetic hands for children whose families cannot afford commercial prosthetics. I also mapped walking routes of Durham NC's most fire-prone neighborhoods for American Red Cross volunteers to follow when installing and replacing fire detectors. For Personal Development I earned BSA Venturing's highest award, the Silver Award, after earning Bronze, Gold and Ranger awards. These accomplishments were no less challenging than earning my Eagle Scout award. For my Physical Fitness I became an intermediate level table tennis player, learned to play golf, and practiced lap swimming to increase my physical endurance. For my Expedition I planned a tour of landmarks and museums in New York City. Earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal gave me valuable experiences to improve my leadership skills by first focusing on the needs of my Venture Crew and travel companions when making decisions.

**Geoffrey Gerdau**

*Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Stacy Payne*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America*

For my Voluntary Public Service I helped plan and coordinate six blood drives resulting in the collection of 150 pints of blood for the American Red Cross, potentially helping save the lives of 450 patients in need. For my Personal Development I earned the BSA Venturing Silver Award, Venturing's highest, with skill mastery levels and requirements similar to my Eagle Scout award. This required earning both Venturing's Bronze and Gold awards. I also earned the Ranger award for high-level outdoor/high-adventure skills and leadership. My Physical Fitness improved significantly by learning to play golf, increasing my swimming stamina and practicing to become an intermediate level table tennis player. My Expedition included planning travel to explore landmarks and museums in New York City. Of all the skills and experiences from earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, my lasting impression is learning that I could persevere and achieve my own lofty, long term goals while leading others to make their best decisions.

---

**Abigail Amato**

*Blowing Rock, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Sarah Jackson*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I cleaned the facilities and built animal habitats at Grand Father Mountain. I also worked with the Project on Aging in my local community by organizing and participating in events. Lastly, I volunteered at the Coal River Group Project by testing the river and helping events run smoothly. For Personal Development, I worked to increase my lower body strength, speed and agility, and explosiveness. I did this by training with former NFL player Dexter Jackson. During the training, I did sprinting drills, box jumps, quick ladder, explosive moves, and various weight and resistance training. My Physical Fitness goal was to increase my endurance, and to achieve this I had soccer practice three days a week, along with games and tournaments on the weekends. I also trained at home with different workouts. Lastly, but most importantly, I cleaned up my diet by cutting out processed foods and sugar. For my Expedition I was able to learn about the rich history of St. Augustine, Florida, by visiting many significant historical sites in that area, specifically the oldest chapel in the world. I also took a tour of the fort and explored the city's culture by eating at local restaurants and trying new foods.

**Lillian Amato**

*Blowing Rock, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Sarah Jackson*

To receive my Gold Medal, I volunteered for the Coal River Group. I assisted in the education of children on water cleanliness and dangers of E. Coli and fundraised for Tour de Coal. For Personal Development, I worked to increase my speed and endurance by working two times a week on various drills. Over the years, I cut time on my sprints and gained endurance. For the Physical Fitness portion, I participated in competitive soccer four times a week and trained on my own. My game improved and I acquired a greater level of fitness. For my Expedition I went to St. Augustine Florida and explored the architecture and history. The toughness and grit that the early settlers possessed amazes me. Earning the Congressional Award has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, I have become more confident and learned to serve others through this experience.



---

**Ashlyn Edmisten**

*Blowing Rock, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Sarah Jackson*

*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

For my Voluntary Public Service I worked to provide relief work in Kenya to many people there who were living in poverty and sickness. I was able to serve many disabled children by delivering wheelchairs to them and was also able to assist with immunizations and education for women and children. For Personal Development I took a job as a dance teacher assistant to learn how to teach children in tap, jazz, and ballet. This job included choreographing and teaching dances, creating costumes and props, and organizing energetic children. This job has advanced my multi-tasking, communication, and leadership skills. For Physical Fitness, my goal was to develop my dance skills, strength, and conditioning in order to audition and be accepted into a precision dance troupe, the Carolina Snowbellies. I achieved this goal by frequently training in dance and working at home to develop strength. My Expedition goal was to immerse myself in African culture and explore a new environment, new languages, and a completely different way of life. While in Africa I chatted with locals to learn more about their languages, food preparation, ways of living, and available resources. I have enjoyed serving my community by striving to be a glimmer hope in places that need joy.

**Hattie Rose Greene**

*Boone, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Gena Amato*

*Affiliations: United States Coast Guard*

To earn the Gold Medal, I spent my Voluntary Public Service served the elderly in my community and volunteered at my local Hunger and Health Coalition. I also made blankets for the Linus Blanket Project and directed fundraisers for the cause. To complete my Personal Development goals, I took on a part-time job as an assistant dance teacher to improve my teaching and choreography abilities and make steps toward my future goal of teaching my own dance class. As I progressed, I was given opportunities to lead warm ups and teach choreography on my own. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I challenged myself to make huge leaps in my dance and health goals. I had high expectations for my improvement in different dance techniques and skills as well as organized specific days to work-out and practice on my own. To complete my Exploration, I traveled to the East coast of Florida to observe the wildlife. I explored the beach, ocean, intercoastal, marshes, and other habitats. Experiencing a completely different environment from my home in the mountains of North Carolina was unique and educational. The experiences and knowledge I gained from competing the Congressional Award have impacted my life, and I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this program!

---

**Kylah Jackson**

*Boone, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Laura Edmisten*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I spent my time at Grandfather Mountain, one of North Carolina's many state parks. Additionally, I volunteered with a non-profit, river restoration and economic development group called the Coal River Group, located in West Virginia. For Personal Development, I had two goals. The first was to explore possible career paths through child care. My second goal was being able to converse in Spanish. I spent many hours using online resources to learn as much as I could. I also traveled to Honduras and practiced the language there. For Physical Fitness, I set some very specific goals for my sport of choice, swimming. I trained daily, sometimes twice a day, for over 2 years to cut time off of my favorite races. I traveled to many swim meets across the Southern states to compete and reach the goals I set for myself. For my Expedition portion, I planned a 13-day road trip with my family to drive through the Western states. We visited national parks like the Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, and Mt. Zion. We also explored many cities including some in Texas, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Earning the Congressional Award gave me many amazing experiences and taught me the importance of determination and perseverance.

**Alaina Randolph**

*Pittsboro, North Carolina*

*Advisor: John Gerwin*

I spent my Voluntary Public Service in the ornithology lab of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences preparing bird skeletons for use in scientific studies. I also assisted with public outreach using the live animals I helped care for as a Junior Curator. For Personal Development, I worked with a young horse, training him to canter smoothly under saddle without bucking. While at first even his trotting was inconsistent, I was able to canter him bareback by the end. For Physical Fitness, I did powerlifting, yoga, swimming, and running. I increased my powerlifting total (over three lifts--squats, bench presses, and deadlifts) by more than a hundred pounds to over 350. To learn more about the culture, architecture, and notable figures of the Colonial Age and Gilded Era, I journeyed to Newport, Rhode Island for my Expedition. I walked down brick streets, explored trading wharfs, toured opulent cottages, and hiked the Cliff Walk. During my participation in the Congressional Award, I was inspired to volunteer more actively at the museum, to put more focused energy into horseback riding, and to be more proactive about staying fit. I developed methods of setting and meeting goals which could be applied to almost any hobby or work throughout my life.

---

**Bryson Rose**

*Concord, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Tina Fillmer*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity, Key Club, Special Olympics, YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by serving underprivileged families in my community. I served meals at a local soup kitchen, organized community Pancake Days and Blood Drives, planned canned food drives and Angel Trees for gifts for the local children. For Personal Development, I earned my Lifeguard and Swim Instructor Certifications and worked at local pools to apply my skills and gain experience. I also taught myself Spanish and traveled to Nicaragua and Colombia to practice speaking Spanish with children at schools and churches. For my Physical Fitness I improved my running endurance and speed by reducing my 1 mile time from 7:30 min to 6:30 min for a minimum of three miles. I also employed weight and agility training to increase my pitching speed from 70 to 80 mph. For my Expedition, I planned a 5 night exploration trip to the Outer Banks to travel and explore the major events of the last 500 years in the Outer Banks and learn more about the role of the Outer Banks in the making of American History. The Congressional Award was an incredible experience for me! It taught me how to serve others around me, to give of my time to improve my community and to try challenging things to help me discover my passion in life.

**Kamin Bond**

*Wesley Chapel, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Elizabeth Hartley*

*Affiliations: YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I have completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by serving at YMCA camps, coaching at local basketball camps, and assisting in the classroom at a local elementary school. My favorite activity in the Personal Development category was working at Kumon Learning Center, where I tutored young students in their math and reading homework. This opportunity has allowed me to develop relationships and gain effective teaching and leadership skills. For Physical Fitness, I wanted to make my varsity basketball team as a sophomore and be the starting point guard. In addition to practicing passing, shooting and dribbling, I conditioned my body by jogging around the neighborhood and training with coaches during the summer. My favorite aspect of my Congressional Award journey was my Expedition. I traveled to Washington, D.C. in August of 2017 for a five-day exploration to immerse myself in my African-American heritage and culture. My parents and I explored ten museums, four memorials, and several cultural landmarks and restaurants. The Congressional Award was an enriching, four-year journey that has taught me commitment and endurance and the importance of service and selflessness while enabling me to discover my passions.

---

**Rucheer Dave**

*Matthews, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Melissa LaBue*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

In my journey towards earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed just over 640 hours of Voluntary Public Service serving as a STEM Intern at a science museum, completing my Eagle Scout project. For Personal Development, I completed a three-year intensive online Sanskrit course and residential summer camps for deeper immersion into the ancient language. I have learned the Sanskrit grammar and script which has enabled me to read my Hindu scriptures without transliteration. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I ran Cross Country for my school team and learned yoga. Over the course of two years, my race time improved by two minutes. While practicing yoga, I perfected the sun salutation and learned different poses and breathing exercises to improve balance and focus. Finally, for my Expedition I hiked one hundred miles over ten days at Philmont Scout Ranch which challenges a scout's resilience and perseverance. As a crew leader, I was responsible for delegating, navigating, and fostering a motivating atmosphere. We summited Little Costillal, which is 12,585 feet tall. The process of setting and completing goals in each category has taught me the importance of time management, documentation, and the power of persistence.

**Aislinn Niimi**

*Matthews, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Sherri Madden*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service with local organizations that directly provide assistance to homeless and under-privileged people, including Bright Blessings, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Second Harvest Food Bank, H.O.P.E. for Union County, and Room in the Inn. My Personal Development goal was to pass the Japanese Language Proficiency Test at the N3 level. I met with a native Japanese teacher once a week and did daily lessons to prepare for the test, which greatly improved my comprehension, and I was able to pass the test. For Physical Fitness, I hiked the challenging 10 mile Profile Trail to Calloway Peak at Grandfather Mountain, with an elevation gain of 2,358 feet. To prepare for this hike I walked every week, gradually increasing the difficulty, and I practiced yoga to build muscle and improve flexibility. For my Exploration, I experienced what life would be like on an early 20th century farm, including having no electricity, no running water, no air conditioning, no Wi-Fi, and no cell service. I stayed at the Pioneer House at Willet Ponds Farm, learned to cook on a wood-fire stove, and did chores on the farm.

---

**William David**

*Asheville, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Michael Mohnney*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service researching, planning and leading four ongoing conservation initiatives related to my completion of the William T. Hornaday Silver Medal in Conservation. In addition to my personal work, over 1000 students contributed over 3000 hours to these environmental service projects. For my Personal Development, I participated in a FIRST Robotics Competition Team where I gained communication and leadership experience, as well as technical skills. My conservation service and robotics experiences inspired me to found programs to provide mentorship, STEM education and outdoors experiences to disadvantaged students. For my Physical Fitness goal, I trained for and completed challenges in Hiking, Backpacking, Aquatics, and Mountain Biking, through the Boy Scouts of America. I also earned my Open Water Diver scuba certification which I later used to work on coral reef restoration. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to 3 European countries. This included exploring and enjoying the natural beauty of Iceland, and learning about its unique culture and geology. Through my conservation work and STEM education and mentorship program, I gained the skills to bring people together to accomplish something larger together.

**Kristina Vaheer**

*Belmont, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Mr. Johnathon Huitt*

*Affiliations: YMCA*

For my Voluntary Public Service I installed five children's reading libraries in my community. I provided a summer camp experience for underprivileged children in my town by being a volunteer camp counselor. I started a local book club in my community to get young children excited about reading at an early age. My Personal Development activity was to improve my public speaking and critical thinking skills by being on the award winning Mock Trial team at my school for four years. I also improved my piano playing skills with weekly lessons and practice time. For Physical Fitness I improved my running time to consistently achieve a 7.5 minute mile and I became a running buddy for the Girls on the Run team at school by running their 5K races with them. I also improved my volleyball skills and became a starter for my school varsity team. For my Expedition I traveled to Kenya to immerse myself in a completely unfamiliar culture so I could learn how the lifestyle of children in Kenya was different from mine. I also wanted to share my life with those children and teenagers. I spend two weeks traveling and meeting with children and teens in Kenya. My participation in this program has challenged me to set goals for myself and persevere to achieve those goals while overcoming obstacles and learning to become a leader in my community.

---

**Angelina Bayrak**  
*Mooresville, North Carolina*  
*Advisor: Karen Lehw*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I worked as a Young Adult Volunteer at the Mooresville Public Library. I set up and broke down events, shelved books, worked as a substitute at the reference desk, and acted as assistant to the librarian. I also participated in events such as Adopt-a-Highways and teen clubs. For Personal Development, my goal was to develop cooking and baking abilities over the course of two years. For this, I made at least one recipe every week, and tried to cook or bake for at least three hours a week. I also made a personal blog where I recorded my progress and how each recipe went. To reach my Physical Fitness goal, I practiced synchronized swimming for over 15 hours a week which also included land training workouts, gymnastics and stretching, and lap swimming. For my Exploration, I organized a planned trip to Kiev and Lviv, Ukraine, where I explored the culture by visiting many national landmarks and trying traditional Ukrainian dishes. I genuinely believe that the Congressional Award helped me become more independent in many aspects of my life, and taught me to organize and plan more effectively.

**Carson Cook**  
*Mooresville, North Carolina*  
*Advisor: Angela Sims*

For my Voluntary Public Service I did my Eagle Scout project, which was to create 10 chess training videos that were distributed to each chess club in my school system and run a chess tournament which raised over \$1000 to purchase chess sets and clocks. I also taught chess and tutored students in academic subjects. For my Personal Development I worked to get my United States Chess Federation (USCF) rating to 1800 where I would gain the Category A title. I played in USCF rated chess tournaments, took private chess lessons, and practiced by myself using chess books and online resources. For Physical Fitness I took tennis lessons, played in practice tennis matches, and did tennis drills in order to make my high school tennis team. I also purchased and used a vertical jump training program called "Vert Shock", did exercises with and without weights, and ran sprints to increase my vertical jump. For my Expedition I planned and led a family trip to Boston, Massachusetts, Ithaca, New York, and New York City, New York, to explore the cities and learn more about life in each one. Earning the Congressional Award helped me become a better communicator, be more outgoing, and actively seek out my interests for my own betterment, and for that, I am extremely grateful.

---

**Cole Heinrich**

*Mooresville, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Peter Browne*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Key Club, National Honor Society, YMCA*

In order to complete my Voluntary Public Service requirement, I spend a lot of my time as a junior volunteer at my local fire department, the Lake Norman Fire & Rescue. I also participated in events for the Boy Scouts of America including food drives and Eagle Projects. In order to earn my Personal Development hours, I spent a lot of my time lifeguarding at the Lowes YMCA of Greater Charlotte in Mooresville, NC. I also trained for many years at the R.T. Berry School of Taekwondo and earned 4 black belts. In order to maintain Physical Fitness I participated in three seasons of football for my high school team and I also participated in three seasons of varsity track doing pole vault and jumping events. In order to earn my nights for Exploration, I went to philmont with my Boy Scout Troop for twelve days and learned about the exciting activities the outdoors have to offer. In my overall experience with The Congressional Award, I learned the overall benefits and values of living a service-oriented life while also maintaining physical fitness and learning values that are applicable to multiple areas of my life.

**Sruthi Mannepalli**

*Mooresville, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Elizabeth Hagaman*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, National Honor Society, YMCA*

I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at my local hospital a local charity. I helped low-income families by assisting them in grocery shopping, ensuring each family had free food for the week. At the hospital, I volunteered in the ER and Women's Services. For Personal Development, I focused on improving my piano skills. With over 200 hours of learning and practice, I have won superior titles and a gold trophy for three National Federation of Music competitions. I can now play a range of classical music, including Mozart, Beethoven, Sonata, etc. For Physical Fitness, I focused on improving my tennis skills. Participating on my school's tennis team for 4 years and taking lessons almost every week, I am now a varsity tennis player in the Top 6 on my school's tennis team. I have earned 3 varsity letters and was the 2018 Conference Champion. For the Exploration aspect of the program, I planned and executed a trip to Asheville for a week, exploring its historical and popular sites such as Biltmore and the Thomas Wolfe Memorial. The Congressional Award was a very rewarding experience, where I was able to not only improve my perseverance and communication skills but also meet new people and explore my interests.

---

**Brett Sims**

*Mooresville, North Carolina*

*Advisor: Sharon Cook*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

I completed Voluntary Public Service activities with my robotics team and a wide variety of local organizations to teach kids about STEM concepts including electronics, programming, mechanical design, and robot operation. For Personal Development I learned the Java and Python coding languages to expand my coding skillset. I also taught myself mathematics and physics to compliment my coding knowledge. For Physical Fitness I practiced archery, working toward improving my accuracy and went on walks of increasing distance to improve my endurance. I planned my Expedition to Yellowstone National Park with my family. I researched what sights and restaurants would be best to see and in what order to maximize the trip.

**Lauren Knoll**

*Fargo, North Dakota*

*Advisor: Matthew Larson*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I sought to combat hunger in my community and surrounding areas by serving at my local homeless shelter and starting three community gardens. I also volunteered at Vineyard Kids and raised awareness for our nation's veteran's through essays, speeches and choir tours. For my Personal Development, I honed my piano skills by doing piano competitions, performances, and attending weekly lessons. I feel that I have grown as a pianist and also in my performance abilities. For the Physical Fitness portion, I spent two hours every week working out, doing weekly dance lessons and other activities, such as kayaking, skiing, paddle boarding, and hiking. I challenged myself with a variety of workouts that were fun and pushed me to grow and persevere. For my Exploration, I planned a week visit to Washington, D.C., where I visited many historical sites and followed the story of our nation. I learned how to plan and execute a detailed itinerary, navigate a large city, and think on my feet when things did not always go as planned. The Congressional Award has motivated me to grow and develop my character, encouraging my servant's heart and allowing me to make a difference in the hearts around me.



---

**Ishita Kode**

*Springboro, Ohio*

*Advisor: Anant Deshpande*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

Although I pursued many activities in my journey to achieve the Gold Medal, I was most impacted by my time spent assisting the local hospital. As I assisted the nurses in the ER and spoke with the patients in rehab, I learned how to encounter every problem swiftly. My Personal Development goals were met through my commitment to the Springboro Kumon Center. I went there weekly in order to educate young children on a multitude of math topics (ranging from addition to advanced differentiation), as well as reading topics (ranging from the alphabet to Shakespeare). I completed my Physical Fitness goals through the completion of my Bhartanatyam Arangetram. An Arangetram is an intensive solo classical dance recital symbolizing the graduation of a dancer's career as a student. After 9 years of hard work and intense choreography, I met the goal I aimed to achieve. In order to experience a culture different from my own, I planned an Expedition to Hilton Head, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia. Here I embraced a new culture by taking long walks down historical streets, growing my appreciation for street musicians, and trying new and unusual cuisines. By participating in the Congressional Award program, I have learned the importance of setting goals and how each of my individual goals can affect my community as a whole for the better.

**Varshini Odayar**

*Mason, Ohio*

*Advisor: Haridas Radhakrishnan*

I dedicated hundreds of hours helping underprivileged children in third world countries with educational and medical support and also volunteered to prepare high protein food packs for orphans and vulnerable children around the world. At the Children's Hospital, I helped kids with sports therapy. For Personal Development I improved my Violin skills by challenging myself with new songs every week, perfecting the pitch, intonation, rhythm and sight-reading skills. I chose songs which involved many transitions between various positions. To achieve my Physical Fitness goal, I created a personal workout schedule and set time limits to run on the treadmill and jogging outside school. I increased my basketball skills by practicing for more time and thus increased my free-throw percentage. For my Expedition, I planned a five day trip to London. I learned about the Gothic architecture, structure of the government, and the culture as I visited the city. From the Royal Mews to the Buckingham Palace, it was a wonderful experience. Through this award, I have learned to set goals and attained knowledge and proficiency in several fields from service to music and physical fitness.

---

**Heema Vyas**  
*Springboro, Ohio*  
*Advisor: Venugopal Yerubandi*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

In pursuit of the Congressional Award, I experienced a variety of volunteer opportunities. I often visited the Atrium Medical Center as an E.R. volunteer, and served as a volunteer waitress at “One Bistro” Restaurant. I also participated in many community events through National Honor Society. For Personal Development, I wanted to expand upon my musical abilities and my emergency preparedness skills. Through diligent violin practice and music theory study, I became a more experienced member of my school orchestra. I also became certified in CPR, AED, and Emergency Oxygen Administration. To achieve my Physical Fitness goals, I joined my school’s Cross Country and Swim teams in hopes of improving my 5k and 50 meter freestyle race times, respectively. For each goal, I attended daily practices, followed self-made nutritional plans, and attended weekly meets/races to gauge my progress. Finally, I planned a family Exploration to three major tourist destinations: Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. For each city, I mapped out a daily itinerary of family-friendly activities that expanded upon our understanding of tourist culture through unique immersion experiences. With the completion of each portion of The Congressional Award, I am grateful for the time I have given back, the people I have met, the places I have visited, and the determined, passionate mindset by which I will continue to live my life.

**Sai Ashish Bommasani**  
*Beavercreek, Ohio*  
*Advisor: Anant Deshpande*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

To earn the Congressional Gold Award, I volunteered for over 400 hundred hours over the span of two years. Most of my volunteering took place in various hospitals, where I gave back to various different aspects of my community such as veterans and the elderly. For Personal Development, I continued to work toward the rank of Eagle at my local Boy Scout troop. I also furthered my knowledge by joining my local Kumon center. I am now a proud Eagle Scout and I have also successfully completed the Reading program for Kumon. For Physical Fitness, I joined my highschool’s Cross Country and Track teams to get into shape and run a 10K. I have now successfully finished a 10K in less than 55 minutes. I am also on leadership council for my Cross Country team. I went to Philmont Scout Ranch for my Expedition. It was an enriching experience where I was forced to think on the fly, gain new insights, and act as a leader. The Congressional Award has been a life changing experience which taught me that I can achieve whatever I put my mind to.

---

**Rohan Desarapu**

*Beavercreek, Ohio*

*Advisor: Lalitha Mahadevan*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

In earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I volunteered over 400 hours at Miami Valley Hospital and at Soin Medical Center. In addition, I donated handmade items such as blankets and ponchos to St. Vincent de Paul homeless shelter. For Personal Development, I worked towards and attained the rank of Eagle Scout in Boy Scouts. In progressing on achieving the rank, I planned and led a community service project where 120 trees were planted for the Beavercreek Wetlands Association. My goal for Personal Fitness was to be able to hit a 30 groundstroke rally in tennis. I can now hit a 15-20 groundstroke rally recurrently and have hit a 35 groundstroke rally. For my Expedition, I went on a Philmont backpacking trek in New Mexico with a Boy Scout crew. We hiked over 70 miles in 10 days. Overall, working on the Congressional Award has allowed me to explore my interests toward a potential career in medicine as well as made me much better at setting goals and creating a plan to reach them.

**Shravan Kalahasthy**

*Dayton, Ohio*

*Advisor: Venugopal Yerubandi*

*Affiliations: People to People International*

I conducted bone marrow drives in my local community in order to add more potential donors to the National Bone Marrow Registry, amassing over 700 new potential donors. I also tutored refugee children and volunteered at Miami Valley Hospital and Atrium Hospital. I enhanced my piano skills through hours of practice. I play piano in order to keep my mind off of the stresses of every day life and through my Personal Development, I was able to strengthen this calming mechanism. For Physical Fitness, I practiced and played tennis. I practice at a local club called South Regency Tennis and Fitness Center and I also played for my high school's Junior Varsity and Varsity teams. For my Exploration, I went on a trip to Spain, France, and Italy with People to People International. I interacted with local citizens, volunteered, and learned about local cultures. I also had a brief experience in which I stayed with a Spanish family and learned about their daily lives while also enjoying myself. My experience with The Congressional Award has helped me give back to the community while also learning about myself.

---

**Manaswini Nedunuri**

*Fairborn, Ohio*

*Advisor: Venugopal Yerubandi*

For my Voluntary Public Service activities, I chose to help in the areas of hospitals, homeless shelters, and fundraising for associations such as the American Cancer Society, LLS, St. Vincent de Paul and American Heart Association. For Personal Development, I chose speech and debate and music. I furthered my skills in speech and debate by attending more competitions and workshops. In music, I practiced more hours a day to improve my technique. For Physical Fitness, I set goals in both yoga and running to later improve my dance skills. Yoga helped me to improve my flexibility for Indian classical dance and running helped me improve with my endurance and be able to perform a solo recital for three hours. Lastly, for my Exploration, I planned a trip to Grenada, West Indies to perform a KAP study and immerse myself in a culture that is wholly different than the one I grew up in. During the trip, I gained an appreciation for diverse cultures. Earning the Congressional Award allowed me to experience immense gratitude and sharpen skills and techniques that not only benefited me, but the community as well.

**Pavan Raghupathy**

*Centerville, Ohio*

*Advisor: Krishna Nedunuri*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of volunteering at a local hospital, nursing home, and library. At the hospital and nursing home, I restocked supplies and played games like Bingo and Trivia with residents. At the library, I helped at teen programs that encouraged reading. For my Personal Development goals, I worked to earn a black belt in karate and to perform an hour long solo concert on the Indian flute, both by attending classes and by practicing individually. For Physical Fitness, I had goals to complete a half marathon and to improve my tennis accuracy. For the former, I trained for months to gain the endurance to run for that long of a distance. For the latter, I attended various clinics and private lessons to refine my technique. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to Washington, DC with a goal to gain a more complete understanding of our nation's history. During this trip, I visited and explored various monuments and historic sites, as well as different museums around the DC area. The Congressional Award has been an amazing experience and has taught me the importance of being dedicated to not only enriching myself, but also enriching the community at the same time.

---

**Anjali Raju**  
*Centerville, Ohio*  
*Advisor: Saru Erukonda*

To earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I volunteered my time at the local hospital over the summer and at a soup kitchen on various Sundays. I was also a part of a local library's teen organization, where I volunteered my time helping out with various educational programs they put on for people of all ages. For Personal Development, I was involved with various school organizations and dedicated my time to my high school's Mock Trial and Science Olympiad teams. I also took on a leadership position at my local dojo, where I taught classes. For Physical Fitness, I worked towards getting my black belt, which involved improving my mental and physical skills, and I learned how to effectively defend myself and be aware of my surroundings. Lastly, for my Exploration, I took a trip to India to learn more about my culture and heritage. I fully immersed myself by eating the food and talking to various individuals about my family and getting a glimpse into their daily lives.

**Neha Rokkam**  
*Springboro, Ohio*  
*Advisor: Anant Deshpande*

In order to earn The Congressional Award, I spent 400 hours volunteering at a medical center, preparing and serving fresh meals to the local community, making handcrafted items for charity, and donating books to a children's hospital. Volunteering in my community was an eye-opening experience. For Personal Development, I became a stronger violinist by enhancing my shifting skills; this enabled me to play challenging pieces cohesively. In addition, I worked on becoming a better Indian Classical Music singer by memorizing the first six chapters of music. My Physical Fitness goal was to switch to an advanced tennis serve grip. Changing the grip, though a slow transition, makes it harder for an opponent to receive the ball, as the ball has more spin to it. This helps my tennis drive immensely. My Exploration was an exciting trip to the Big Apple. I was immersed in the culture and adjusted to the New York City lifestyle, and it was truly an amazing experience. I got to experience many new opportunities such as navigating subways and trying new foods. Overall, the Congressional Award had a positive impact on many aspects of my life and I am happy to have received this award.

---

**Samith Venkatesh**  
*Centerville, Ohio*  
*Advisor: Johnathan Derr*

To earn The Congressional Award Gold Medal, I volunteered at VA Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio, where I supported Veterans and gave back to those who gave so much to our nation. For Personal Development, I competed in Speech & Debate. I learned how to write effective speeches and improved my linguistic techniques in order to become a more proficient debater. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my tennis skills. I practiced regularly, took group and private lessons, and competed at the USTA and Varsity levels. Lastly, for my Exploration, I traveled to Spain, where I immersed myself in a new culture and environment.

**Ryan Brady**  
*Shaker Heights, Ohio*  
*Advisor: Gail Emmet*  
*Affiliations: HOBY, United States Marine Corps*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I reported on city council meetings and initiated a political club at my school, founded a non-profit pen pal program to foster friendship and literacy in hearing impaired children, and raised money to help fund the construction of two local Veterans' Fisher Houses. For the Personal Development portion, I improved my debate and research skills by participating in my school's debate team, attending camps and competitions, and mentoring younger students. I learned to effectively construct evidence based speeches and deliver them with conviction and strength. For Physical Fitness, I improved my strength, endurance, and speed by attending field hockey and lacrosse tournaments and camps with both club and school teams. For my Exploration, I traveled from Cleveland, Ohio, to Barcelona and Madrid in Spain to immerse myself in Spanish culture. I compared and contrasted the language, food, and architecture of the two cities and summarized my findings and my trip in a detailed research paper. From participating in the Congressional Award, I learned to set challenging yet attainable goals and to manage my time in four aspects crucial to living a well-rounded life.

---

**Emmanuel Scaria**

*Broadview Heights, Ohio*

*Advisor: Natalie Smyczek*

*Affiliations: Key Club, National Honor Society*

To earn the Congressional Award, I dedicated over 400 hours of volunteer work to my community by volunteering at a local hospice and assisted living facility. I also worked at a community organization, distributing food and washing dishes. For Personal Development, I decided to commit my time to language studies, spending over 200 hours learning how to read, write, and speak in my native language. For the Physical Fitness component, I focused on improving my tennis skills. By isolating and training fundamental skills with my tennis coach, I was able to improve my overall play style and win a greater percentage of my matches during my formal season. For the Exploration requirement, I planned and executed a trip to Europe. By immersing myself in the rich culture of Germany, France, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands, I gained a greater appreciation and interest in exploring new environments and trying new things. The Congressional Award has instilled in me the unbounded goals of serving my community, trying new things, and dedicating myself to a greater cause.

**Genevieve Hager von Carlowitz**

*Utica, Ohio*

*Advisor: Stephanie Stephens*

My diverse Voluntary Public Service activities at the Salvation Army, The Woodlands, Licking Memorial Hospital, Red Cross, and Adopt-a-Highway while in high school, and throughout college in Cincinnati during XU Community Action Days, broadened my understanding of the countless ways to help others. My Personal Development activities, including voice and guitar lessons and developing leadership skills through OMUN and TEDx event planning, each taught me something new. I gained self-confidence and a fearlessness when sharing my talents with others. Physical fitness activities of volleyball, swimming, and running, came with new challenges. My involvement in team sports developed my ability to work collaboratively, and individual activities expanded my understanding of my own determination and endurance. Skills gained from the above activities benefitted me during my Exploration to Sweden when, immersed in a new culture, I was challenged and pushed beyond my comfort zone. Participation in this program has given me self-confidence, immense self-awareness, a love of serving others, and the ability to dare greatly.

---

**Paul Hager**

*Utica, Ohio*

*Advisor: Stephanie Stephens*

I provided Voluntary Public Service to Adopt-a-Highway, the Salvation Army, Licking Memorial Hospital, and as a member of the Licking County 4-H Band. These efforts remind me how the voluntary work of others benefits me. For Personal Development, I advanced my musical and theatre skills through lessons and performances. I also improved my leadership skills through OMUN, Buckeye Boys State, and RYLA, and made great strides toward becoming a person who can better interact with many; skills I will utilize throughout my life. For Physical Fitness, I strove to develop and maintain productive health and fitness habits through running and swimming. These experiences solidified my intuition that a life which focuses on good health is better than one that does not. For my Exploration, I travelled to China and learned more about the local culture of another nation. This experience will continue to inform my perspective on my community and its interaction with the greater world. Earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal reignited my belief in the strength of people in my community; especially those who guided me to plan, organize, and achieve it.

**Bailey Quitter**

*Utica, Ohio*

*Advisor: Lisa Blair*

*Affiliations: YMCA; Civil Air Patrol*

I volunteered at two humane societies, a YMCA, and hospital in addition to serving with my local Civil Air Patrol squadron. I really appreciated the friendships I made as I served the public. A Personal Development goal I chose for the Congressional Award was to improve my musical performance skills by participating in recitals, chamber music ensembles, and orchestras. Another goal I set was to complete my first solo airplane flight; fulfilling this goal helped me become more confident. For Physical Fitness, I focused on improving my overall fitness, increasing my endurance, and learning about water safety and rescue. I accomplished this through strength and cardio training, swimming lessons, and scuba diving courses. For my Congressional Award Exploration, I spent two weeks in Guatemala on a medical Spanish trip. I lived with a host family, studied daily with a native speaker, explored Guatemala, and assisted clinic, pharmacy, and nutrition outreach teams. I had so many amazing experiences and learned so much about myself through this experience.



---

**Grace Cousens**

*Chardon, Ohio*

*Advisor: Heather Means*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA; Senate Page; Boys and Girls Club*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at my community garden whose fresh produce goes to food pantries, The Giving Garden. I built new trellises, weeded, planted new vegetables, stained garden beds, and raised money for additional garden expenses. For Personal Development, I improved my skills as a high school public forum debater and learned more about public speaking and the art of communication. Debate taught me the power of words and social discourse to create empathy for all sides of current issues. For Physical Fitness, I worked out at my school's athletic campus over my high school years & learned more about health and wellness. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a six-night trip to Belgium. While in Belgium, I navigated through public transportation and communicated with local Airbnb hosts. We traveled to different cities including Bruges, Brussels, and Ghent where I learned about Belgium's rich history and culture. The Congressional Award was an incredible experience that helped me discover what I am passionate about. I found the courage to pursue my dreams, the empathy to look past my own perspective and the perseverance to conquer any obstacle that comes in my life.

**Chatura Tamirisakandala**

*Solon, Ohio*

*Advisor: Archana Nayar*

*Affiliations: Key Club; Senate Page*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered at the Cleveland Zoo by helping to teach people how to protect wildlife and strengthen people's conservation efforts. I also volunteered 200 hours for my school's Drama Club in building the sets for the shows and I volunteered at local libraries and for a program called "Safety Town," teaching young children the importance of road safety. For Personal Development, I improved my debating skills by participating in Model UN. I also improved my coding skills from novice to advanced by participating in a summer camp at a university. For Physical Fitness, I hiked through parks, local and national, and worked toward building endurance while also exploring the outdoors. I also improved my weight lifting skills by providing assistance to my school's show choir crew lifting the sets during competitions. Lastly, for my Expedition, I backpacked in Yosemite National Park's backcountry for nine consecutive days and nights, completing a hiking trip of about 52 miles. I coordinated my travel, meals, navigation, exploration, and research throughout this Expedition. The Congressional Award has provided me with the ability to explore the world around me while improving my skills constantly and discovering my hidden passions.

---

**Ted Bigler**

*Tulsa, Oklahoma*

*Advisor: Ethan Tonne*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at the local library, where I helped shelving and organizing books. I also volunteered at Cross-over Community Impact, where I managed, taught, and assisted lower opportunity elementary kids and at the Hope Pregnancy Center keeping the facility organized, clean, and patient-friendly. Over the past four years I have been learning the Chinese language. I have studied both Mandarin and the Chinese culture through working through curriculum every week with my private instructor. I am a swimmer on the City Dolphins swim team. For Physical Fitness, I practiced 2-3 times a week, attended meets, and helped coach the team. Swim team has not only pushed me physically but has taught me how to set and attain my goals. In the summer of 2018, I planned and executed an Expedition to Washington D.C. Being from Oklahoma, I was able to immerse myself in a completely different culture and lifestyle as well as simultaneously learning a great deal about our country's unique history. From learning how to attain my goals, to learning how live on my own in an entirely foreign environment, working towards The Congressional Award broke me out of my comfort zone in every way possible, and has given me a great deal of confidence and independence.

**Pat Kane**

*Pawhuska, Oklahoma*

*Advisor: Russell Hill*

To complete my Volunteer Public Service, I served at my local soup kitchen and served as a camp counselor in a local summer camp. To complete my Personal Development goals, I participated in speech and debate. I completed my Physical Fitness goals by competing in soccer. Lastly, I lived life out on a ranch to complete my Exploration. The experience I had in earning the Congressional Award was life changing. It made me realize the joy in bettering myself for not only myself, but my community as well.

---

**Patrick Ignatius Townsend**

*Portland, Oregon*

*Advisor: Jan Scrivans*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over four hundred hours of Voluntary Public Service. I dedicated my entire 2013 summer to a local Boy Scout summer camp. During my time at the camp, I helped young adults through many challenging obstacles and learned lifelong leadership skills. To complete the Personal Development portion of this award, I took on the role of Senior Patrol Leader of my Boy Scout Troop to ultimately better my time management, personal confidence, and multitasking skills. To complete the Physical Fitness portion, I dedicated many hours to the pool to increase my stamina so that I could swim a full mile without rest. For my Expedition, I planned and carried out a one-hundred-mile hike in central Oregon from Mount Jefferson to the Three Sisters. This award has taught me that if I truly put my mind to anything it can be accomplished through a bit of hard work and dedication.

**Allison Yang**

*Lansdale, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Amy Sun*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I completed over 400 hours of service at my community hospital. I started with simple chores such as stocking and passing out waters but soon was promoted into a patient ambassador, talking to patients and helping them feel as comfortable as possible during their stay. For Personal Development, I practiced my critical reading and analyzing skills and then transferred what I learned into my writing. I read passages in various genres and wrote rhetorical analyses on the passages to understand the nuances of the piece. To achieve my Physical Fitness goals, I joined my school's lacrosse team to improve my technique while gaining endurance. I worked on decreasing my mile time and increasing the percentage of passes that I could catch. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a 5-day trip to Europe. I prepared the itinerary for each day, including transportation, hostels to stay in at night, and tickets for the attractions. I was immersed in a new culture and was able to try foods outside of my comfort zone, including steak tartare! The Congressional Award was one of the most fruitful activities that I've participated in and it taught me responsibility, dedication, and commitment while providing me opportunities to meet inspiring people and form amazing memories.

---

**Alec Yarnoff**

*Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Joseph Tagliaferro*

*Affiliations: Key Club*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered at the Northern Children Services where I organized and participated in “Game Night,” playing sports with children once a month. I also participated in Abington Reads, teaching young students to read and I volunteered at the Jewish Relief Agency, packing food boxes. For Personal Development, I spent many hours a week maintaining and caring for an exotic reptile collection consisting of large lizards (monitor, tegu and bearded dragon) and small turtles. I also worked during the summers for a pool cleaning company, where I serviced and maintained local pools. My Physical Fitness activities included playing singles on the Abington High School varsity tennis team and also competing in the District doubles tournament. I also participated in USTA tennis events in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and worked with a private coach practicing up to four days a week. For my Exploration, I planned and went with my family on an eleven day trip to Spain where we visited many different cities, including Barcelona, Madrid, Malaga, Granada and the Isle of Ibiza. In each city, we visited historical landmarks and immersed ourselves in the culture and food. In attaining the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I strived to be a well-rounded person, always seeking to balance school work, personal endeavors, and service to others.

**Julia Jones**

*Newtown Square, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Mark Nelson*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, HOBY*

I volunteered with the Olivet Boys and Girls Club and participated in Pottstown Cares. For Personal Development, I aimed to continue to develop my musical performance skills by participating in the school’s musical to further enhance my vocal skills and stage presence. For my Physical Fitness goals, I decided to begin running weekly in order to prepare to join the Track & Field club, which was a new sport for me. I also ran in a 5k race supporting a local school. For my Exploration, I traveled to Costa Rica for a three-week Summer Spanish Immersion to explore the local area, understand the culture, take Spanish classes, and visit various attractions in the region. Overall, my experience has opened my eyes to the world around me and helped me look at my surroundings with a new perspective.

---

**Rebekah Fodale**

*Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Carol Lacock*

In earning the Gold Medal, I accumulated over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by organizing programs for low income children and by helping people who are affected by disability. Through this, I gained compassion and understanding of people who do not have the advantages that I take for granted. For Personal Development, I studied Music Theory 1 and 2 and mastered violin Suzuki books 4 and 5. Additionally I researched how phones positively and negatively affect their users in order to pursue social and mental health. For Physical Fitness, I improved my skills in lacrosse. I learned the attack position and increased my average number of assists per game. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a seven night trip to a Cherokee Indian reservation in North Carolina. While I was there, I learned about the Native American culture and languages. The process of applying and qualifying for the Congressional Award pushed me to hone my organizational skills and encouraged me to grow in areas that I was not particularly experienced in or comfortable with.

**William Huang**

*State College, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Dr. Jun Ni*

*Affiliations: HOBY*

In earning The Congressional Award, I found a passion in helping my community while experiencing working in different settings. Most of my Voluntary Public Service involved interacting with children. For Personal Development, I explored my ancestral culture by learning Chinese myself. I also practiced it daily by talking with my family members. For Physical Fitness, I worked to exercise and improve my athletic skills. I gained a better form and higher accuracy in basketball shooting. I also worked to exercise and improve my athletic skills and gained a better form and higher accuracy in basketball shooting. For my Exploration, I immersed myself into another environment by visiting and staying at a farm. By doing farm work and sleeping overnight, I was able to understand a culture far different than the one I was accustomed to. I enjoyed challenging myself and breaking up my goals into many smaller ones through my journey in attaining The Congressional Award.

---

**Juan Aleman**

*Addison, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Carrie Merschat*

*Affiliations: 4-H, United States Air Force, United States Navy*

I volunteer over 250 hours a year in the movement of expanding STEM knowledge. I hosted STEM events in my community and volunteered as referee in robotics competitions up to the state level. I was a part of a project that handled and distributed over \$250,000 in STEM supplies to over 50 Air Force bases. As the head programmer of FTC robotics team 2818 G-FORCE, I learned how to code in Java and think critically in a software setting. In addition, I was taught how to use numerous other software such as Solidworks, Inkscape, and Autodesk Inventor Professional. I am a second degree black belt in Taekwondo and third stripe white belt in Brazilian Jujitsu. In training for my next belts, I have competed in multiple tournaments, broken boards, sparred, wrestled, and learned new forms. As well as training myself, I also prepare my students for their next belt. For my Expedition, I biked the entire Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) in five nights. Its was an over 150 miles bike ride in which I camped on the path every night. An extra challenge in my Expedition was completing my school work every night as I camped out. The Congressional Award is an amazing opportunity to display the activities I participated in and has given me motivation to explore new adventures.

**Victoria Jawork**

*Abington, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Cindy Begley*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by focusing on aiding in the medical field and in the development of young children. I volunteered at my local hospital and schools in my area. For Personal Development, I took singing lessons and participated in various theater productions. I was able to earn the lead role in the final year of my school show. For my Physical Fitness portion, I trained to decrease my mile time to 5:50 per mile. I trained with my school team and on my own in order to race a mile under this time. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a trip to Pittsburgh where I experienced the the city's culture and nature. The Congressional Award was a life-changing experience that drove me to work hard and challenge myself in ways I never thought possible.

---

**Ruby Chen**

*Jeannette, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Shuhui Wang*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

To earn The Congressional Award Gold Medal, I dedicated my time to various organizations and causes in my community. This included assisting in organizing a school district-wide food drive, volunteering at my local hospital, and volunteering at my local library. For Personal Development, I focused on improving my musicianship and played in the Three Rivers Young People Symphonette on the violin. For Physical Fitness, I attended tennis practices year-round which helped me achieve the 1st singles position on my high school varsity tennis team. Lastly, for my Exploration, I organized trips to places like Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington DC. The path to The Congressional Award Gold Medal has been an unforgettable and amazing experience that has taught me invaluable life lessons.

**Ayush Sharma**

*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: Sharonlea Bayles*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

My Voluntary Public Service goals were centered upon volunteering at the St. Clair Hospital and my temple youth service camp. My overarching goal in this area was to be able to make a lasting impact on others in my community. My Personal Development goal comprised of two activities that I have been a part of: USC Speech and Debate and a part-time job at Kumon Math and Reading Center. My overarching goal for Personal Development was to effectively prepare myself for the competitive workforce we live in today. My Physical Fitness goal was based upon my primary sport of tennis and training for the tennis season. My goals were specified to tennis: increasing my win percentage as a varsity starter as well as increase the speed of my serve and ground strokes. My Expedition experience was one of everlasting impact as I traveled to Bulandshahr, India, which is three hours east of New Delhi, with my father, Dr. Vijaya Kumar of Wayne State University, and his pre-medical students to teach public and general health to rural and impoverished areas. The Congressional Award program has taught me about the importance of being resilient in my high school career and how setting and following through with goals is ultimately the only method of achievement in today's world.

---

**Josef Mueller**

*Allison Park, Pennsylvania*

*Advisor: James Katungyi*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of volunteer work at Sunrise Senior Living, serving meals, assisting with activities, and playing violin for the residents frequently. I also helped to set up local church festivals and served as a mentor for young musicians at a summer music camp. For Personal Development, I enrolled as a member of both the Pittsburgh Youth Concert Orchestra and the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra. Both of these orchestral ensembles have helped me to gain experience in instrumental practice, rehearsal, and performance in a competitive environment. For my Physical Fitness goals, I participated weekly at Young Brothers Tae Kwon Do. Tae Kwon Do has helped me to improve my physical and mental discipline, and to better myself in the art of self-defense. I currently have a 3rd degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a week long visit to the Chautauqua Institution of Chautauqua, New York. While at Chautauqua, I explored the cultural diversity of music and the arts by attending various concerts, performing a recital, and visiting important landmarks in the Institution. While achieving my goals, I came to realize that time is a precious commodity that must not be wasted; the importance of being a productive member of society; prudent decision making is an acquired skill; and that one must not only be grateful for this great country we live in, but seek to pay it forward.

**Grace Sowa**

*North Kingstown, Rhode Island*

*Advisor: Amy Pierson*

In earning my Congressional Award, I completed my Voluntary Public Service hours at the Exeter Animal Shelter and at an after-school program at Quidnessett Elementary School. I took care of animals at the shelter and taught gymnastics to children after school. For Personal Development, I completed several knitting projects and I learned a variety of knitting techniques along the way. I also created blankets and hats and donated them to homeless shelters and hospitals. I completed my Physical Fitness goals by competing in gymnastics. In addition, I also engaged in tumbling at a cheer gym. My Exploration encompassed a trip to Halifax, Canada. I stayed at a local family home, and we traveled to a multitude of historical and picturesque locations including Citadel Hill and Peggy's Cove. I enjoyed building relationships with all the people I interacted with along my journey in earning the Congressional Award.



---

**Bella Kissell**

*Charleston, South Carolina*

*Advisor: Caroline Morey*

For Voluntary Public Service, I worked nearly every weekend for two years at a local South Carolina State Park doing a variety of duties. Some of my responsibilities included being an active interpreter of the park while educating visitors of the rich historic significance of Charles Towne Landing. For my Personal Development goal, I took a side job at a local coffee shop while attending school full time. I worked my way up in two years from an entry level position as being a runner, and making coffee to running the front register and making biscuits. The Physical Fitness aspect of the program was the easiest for me to achieve as I am already on a competitive swim team. However, the goals I set for myself and had to meet were rigorous and took a substantial time to achieve. In fact, I am still working through some follow up of these same goals. Traveling to Peru was the most exciting part of the program. I planned, executed, and immersed myself totally in a culture I was not familiar with while my family tagged along. They fully relied on me for the daily itinerary and execution of each day. This challenging program has given me the ability to have excellent time management skills which will benefit me in my future endeavors, and allowed me to see that each day can be filled with tasks that I enjoy and the fulfillment and satisfaction of completing my commitments.

**Harrison Miller**

*Barnwell, South Carolina*

*Advisor: Eleanor Jones-Edwards*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National Honor Society, Special Olympics,  
YMCA*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 450 hours in Voluntary Public Service, mentoring and motivating youth. I worked with youth during school and at camps and during Boys Scout adventures, impressing upon them the importance of self-confidence to look upon failures as another life skill learned. For Personal Development, I participated in our school job shadowing events as I researched potential future career paths. I put myself out there even more by applying and getting my first job working in a law office and assisting with the South Carolina elections. For my Physical Fitness portion, I did stamina training to be able to run a mile as I pushed through my exercise-induced breathing concerns. I started walking and then running with breaks to progress to compelling a half mile to a mile run. I also played high school tennis and we won two region titles. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a family RV camping trip centered on exploring state parks in South Carolina. I was responsible to make reservations and map out traveling routes to avoid interstate highways. I visited historical landmarks as we camped near lakes and river streams. As I earned Congressional Award, I was able to set goals that kept me engaged with meeting and making new friends. During my job shadowing, I improved my public speaking skills, which helped me during my interviews for college scholarships. I did realize how important it is to be able to express myself. My experiences overall have provided me worthy talking points and I am glad to talk about earning The Congressional Award Gold Medal.

---

**Micah McKnight**

*Anderson, South Carolina*

*Advisor: Andrew Barnes*

In order to fulfill my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at a local food pantry and taught martial arts to kids from a local children's home. I also volunteered with the reading program at a local elementary school and at various summer children's camps. For Personal Development, I elected to improve myself musically by practicing piano and box drum. As a result of this goal, I played in a piano recital and helped lead in worship at our church by playing the box drum. To fulfill the Physical Fitness requirements, I sought to earn my black belt in Kenpo karate and was able to meet that goal. Lastly, I planned a five-day Expedition to Chattanooga, Tennessee to explore both the Native American and Civil War history of the region. My overall experience with the Congressional Award has been fantastic. I have learned and matured much more than I would have if I had not pursued the award, and I am thankful that it has helped me reach the point I am at now.

**Noah McKnight**

*Anderson, South Carolina*

*Advisor: Andrew Barnes*

I volunteered at my local food pantry to help serve and meet the needs of the impoverished and destitute. I also taught self-defense at the local children's home for orphaned or in need kids. Additionally, I taught at music and recreational camps to help children learn, appreciate, and love the arts. For Personal Development, I practiced guitar in order to hone my craft as a guitarist. Guitar is a passion of mine and I overcame obstacles that I previously was unable to surpass. For Physical Fitness, I trained every week in order to achieve and acquire the skills of black belt in the art of Kenpo-jujutsu. I am able to defend myself and help to defend others who cannot defend themselves. For my Exploration, I traveled to Georgia in order to learn more about my family's ancestors and heritage. I also explored numerous Civil War battlefields throughout the state. This was an excellent experience and I learned a lot about military strategy and the tolls that my ancestors overcame. My experience was life changing. I would not trade the relationships built and kept or the numerous hours of tears, sweat, and even blood for anything in the world. The Congressional Award has helped me become a better individual.

---

**Gunnar Hensley**

*Rock Hill, South Carolina*

*Advisor: Laura Summer*

*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics*

For Voluntary Public Service, I helped people through tutoring, cleaning, and helping those less fortunate than me. It was so humbling to be able to help all of those people. Volunteering was a great experience that I am thankful I did. For Personal Development, I learned to play the guitar and continued to improve my skills throughout the years. Guitar has become a major part of my life. For Physical Fitness, I wanted to improve my 5k time and strived to surpass my time with practice and determination. I also became a better baseball player with practice and devotion. For my Exploration, I planned three different trips on my own and had an excellent time on all three; all of which were very different experiences. I am so thankful and overwhelmed in gratitude that I was able to participate in this prestigious program.

**Garrett May**

*Fort Mill, South Carolina*

*Advisor: George Halas*

Earning The Congressional Award was a journey to learn new things. For my Voluntary Public Service, I completed over 450 hours at my local Greenway, engaging in activities from trail keeper to marketing assistant that grew into bridge builder and volunteer trainer. This experience is shaping my future studies. My Personal Development activities encompassed learning a new language, Arabic, and learning how to shoot a pistol and how to correctly lift weights. I have continued learning Arabic, can successfully shoot a bullseye at 15 ft, and I built a life-long workout habit. I chose to challenge myself in Physical Fitness by becoming a high-level tennis player. With a lot of work, I exceeded my goal and inspired my fellow teammates. For my Exploration, I visited Washington, D.C. to see all the history I had studied. I learned planning is complex, that traveling has a lot of responsibilities, and that I love history and D.C. These experiences have broadened my world. For me, the journey was rewarding and I never imagined how much I could enjoy interpersonal interactions and helping people.

---

**Lucas Moyon**

*Rock Hill, South Carolina*

*Advisor: Joe Raad*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I worked in the planetarium at the Museum of York County to present cosmological shows to large audiences and I used computer programs to create original shows for the planetarium dome. I also helped patients and nurses in the emergency room by working with nurses to administer medicine and comfort patients. For Personal Development, I spent hours with my telescope scanning the sky to see and document all eight planets, dozens of nebulae, galaxies, and star clusters. I also prepared for model UN conferences and implemented policy plans while working with other delegates. I recently placed first at the 37th Duke Model UN conference. For Physical Fitness, I captained my club soccer team to become the number one team in the state of South Carolina. To measure my skill, I practiced many hours to increase my juggling record and I ran in my neighborhood to decrease my mile time to six minutes and 35 seconds. My Expedition was a five day trip to the Appalachian Mountains where I explored the super dark night sky. I documented seeing several dozen deep sky objects. I also analyzed over 20 species of plants and how they behave in mountainous settings. The Congressional Award was a daunting challenge, but I am so grateful for everything I learned on the journey, and for everyone who supported me.

**Andrew Tyler Engebretsen**

*Lenoir City, Tennessee*

*Advisor: David P. Lewen, Jr.*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

In earning my award, I served over 400 hours at Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee and the mobile food pantries they support. This included building six raised beds, increasing the output of fresh vegetables for the seniors in the community by 33%. Logging over 1000 hours for Personal Development with the FIRST robotics team 3824, cemented my decision to become a mechanical engineer. Serving as Electronics, Prototype, and Build Team Captains, my team qualified for the World Championships in 2016, 2017, and 2019. For Physical Fitness, I joined a summer swim program and learned to swim and dive. Training with Tennessee Aquatics, I decreased my 50-yard freestyle time to 0:29.80. Lastly, I completed my Expedition at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, where I hiked 85 miles in 12 days. As an experienced camper, I was prepared for everything except the bear that tried to join me for dinner and not showering for 12 days. The Congressional Award taught me that anyone, no matter their age, can positively impact their community.

---

**Christine Li**

*Nashville, Tennessee*

*Advisor: Andy McInturff*

To reach my Voluntary Public Service goal, I volunteered at the Little Pantry by helping deliver food to the hungry population in Nashville and rebuilding the Little Pantry. I also helped to raise youth awareness of hunger and homelessness in Nashville by creating a Youth Advisory Council that involves 30 local youth. For Personal Development, I devoted personal time to upkeep my skills of R and Javascript through self-study, and I applied those skills and learned how to effectively utilize Microsoft CRM and Tableau in an internship with the Center for Economic Research of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. To reach my Physical Fitness goal, I joined the school's soccer team to help my stamina and keep my levels of physical activity high while bonding with my teammates. For my Exploration, I traveled from Nashville, Tennessee to Guilin, China to explore Chinese culture and to learn more about my heritage. I explored the rich culture and history while also getting first-hand knowledge of the Chinese high school education system by visiting a local high school. The Congressional Award challenged me to explore my multi-faceted interests, to be my best self, and to better serve my community and for that, I am very thankful.

**Mitchell Morrison**

*Franklin, Tennessee*

*Advisor: Reney McAtee*

*Affiliations: Special Olympics, YMCA*

I spent over 500 hours of Voluntary Public Service creating athletic opportunities for children with special needs. I served multiple organizations as a coach, camp counselor and swim instructor, as well as led and trained others as special needs volunteers. I worked at creating a greater understanding of cultures outside of the United States. I served as an Advisory Board leader for Sister Cities of Nashville, traveled as an exchange student to Argentina and hosted Argentinian and Chinese exchange students at my home and school. For Physical Fitness, I focused on improving as an athlete by developing my technical skills in soccer and football and increasing my coachability and versatility by trying new positions. My Expedition was a five-day hike on the Appalachian Trail that I planned and executed. My friend and I were the youngest solo hikers we met on the trail that week and we met both some unexpected challenges and some really interesting people! Because of the Congressional Award and my commitment to achieving the goals I set out when I was 13 years old, I've experienced a great deal outside of my comfort zone and it's led me to find some of the passions that make me who I am today.

---

**Saachi Dalal**

*Flint, Texas*

*Advisor: Robert LaMont*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at local medical facilities, where I advocated for healthcare by interacting with patients and physicians. For Personal Development, I continued my advanced piano studies and won several awards. By doing this, I learned different genres of music. For Physical Fitness, I improved my karate and Kata skills. I have moved on to achieving a brown belt. For my Exploration, I planned a seven night trip to Boston and Maine, exploring local culture and history. By planning this trip, I gained the confidence to become a more independent traveler. Participating in The Congressional Award gave me the confidence to serve and lead others within my community and follow my passions.

**Cristian Roma**

*Spring, Texas*

*Advisor: Michael Gabriel*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at Texas Children's Hospital. I helped family's with questions and directions, assisted nurses in perioperative, and held babies in the NICU. For Personal Development, I learned an Introductory to Culinary Arts and Meal Prepping once a week. I now have the basic understandings of cooking safety, cooking methods, culinary terms, and knife cuts. For Physical Fitness, I hiked and trail walked to prepare for my Expedition on the Mt. Whitney Trail. I began logging in five miles a week and finished averaging 30. For my Expedition, I camped in Sequoia National Park and Sierra Nevada Mountain Range for five nights. While on my trip, I hiked, learned and studied Natural History, and star gazed and cooked my meals over self built fires. The Congressional Award gave me the unforgettable experiences of growth, self discipline, courage, and gratitude.

---

**Nevedita Ramachandran**

*Plano, Texas*

*Advisor: Sakthivel Arumugam*

I volunteered for Manegait by leading special needs children through equestrian therapy by horse riding. For Minnie's pantry, I volunteered and organized many fundraisers for the low income families. Through Vibha, I organized and lead several events and also volunteered in the Frisco library. For Personal Development, I improved my public speaking skills by attending Leadership training classes, learning to use speaking methodologies and improved greatly as a speaker. Also, I took SAT lessons and I am especially proud of the work that I put in to improve my SAT scores. For Physical Fitness, I improved my serves and different shot consistency in tennis by taking private lessons. The journey I've taken to. For my Exploration, I explored the history and ancient culture of the Early Texans. I immersed myself in this culture through dining, museums, shrines and interpersonal exploration. I enjoyed organizing the trip to accommodate my parents, sister and my dog Bentley's interests. We also learned a lot and had fun. receive The Congressional Award Gold Medal has taught me the strength of perseverance, self-motivation, and maintaining and finding a balance in my life with extra-curriculars and school. It has made me a better person and taught me that with hard work, time and determination, one person can make a difference. Serving others has become a passion of mine, which I will carry with me the rest of my life. I am incredibly honored to have been able to participate in the Congressional Award program and receiving the Gold Medal along with my sister, I will forever consider this as one of my greatest accomplishments.

**Nikita Ramachandran**

*Plano, Texas*

*Advisor: Sakthivel Arumugam*

For Voluntary Public Service, I organized several fundraisers for the low income families for Minnie's Pantry. Through Vibha, I organized and lead many events and taught kids STEM projects during events. In Manegait, I helped special needs children through equestrian therapy by horse riding and volunteered in the Frisco library. For Personal Development, I took leadership training classes and improved my public speaking skills. I also planned and learned to cook healthy meals from different cuisines with my mom's help and worked on my SAT to improve my scores. For Physical Fitness, I took private lessons to improve my serve and shot consistency in tennis. In doing so, I got on my school's varsity tennis team and attended many local tournaments won several medals. For my Exploration, I learned about the history and the culture of the early Texas. I enjoyed the whole process of planning and completing the trip with my family and my dog, Bentley. This award personally means so much to me because of the huge honor to me, my family, and my community, as well as representing Texas. It has pushed me to become a better version of myself and has allowed me to realize the amount of things I can accomplish if I put my mind to it. I am incredibly honored to have been able to participate in the Congressional Award program and receiving the Gold Medal along with my sister. I will forever consider this one of my greatest accomplishments.

---

**Elias Mosby**

*Van Alstyne, Texas*

*Advisor: MaryBeth Basye*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, National Honor Society, People to People International, Special Olympics, United States Army*

To earn my Congressional Award Gold Medal, I served as a Special Olympics Coach and volunteered in the Student Conservation Association. For Personal Development, I learned sign language and learned to speak Japanese. In order to achieve my Physical Fitness goals, I competed in Power Lifting, Cross Country, Football, and learned to play tennis. Lastly, for my Exploration, I traveled to Cyprus and studied conservation on this island. I also traveled to Japan and improved my linguistic skills. I am thankful for this opportunity!

**Sam Mosby**

*Van Alstyne, Texas*

*Advisor: MaryBeth Basye*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Habitat for Humanity, Key Club, National Honor Society, People to People International, Special Olympics, United States Army*

For Voluntary Public Service, I participated in numerous activities including, serving in Partners PE and as a Special Olympics Coach. I also volunteered as a SEEK Camp Counselor. For Personal Development, I improved my ability to speak Spanish and I learned to speak Arabic. For Physical Fitness, I competed in football and baseball and I learned to compete in Cross Fit. Lastly, for my Exploration, I traveled to the Republic of Jordan to improve my linguistic skills and to learn about the Arabic culture. The Congressional Award was a challenging and very rewarding experience.



---

**Jimmy Liu**  
*Katy, Texas*  
*Advisor: Shixia Huang*

For Voluntary Public Service, I worked with an organization called We Care Act to help disaster relief victims, promote awareness for electronics recycling, and organize fundraisers for children in third-world countries. For Personal Development, I practiced several hours of violin each week in order to improve my skill. I recently got into both dance and volleyball at my new high school. For Physical Fitness, I practice those activities several hours per week with the respective teams. Lastly, for my Expedition, I went camping in Davis Mountains State Park with my parents and a couple of friends.

**Ashley Turnage**  
*Houston, Texas*  
*Advisor: Brendon Singh*

I completed over 475 hours of Voluntary Public Service and donated over 150 blankets to cancer patients, orphans, and the elderly. I delivered blankets to people in hospitals and to families who were affected by Hurricane Harvey in order to provide awareness and comfort. For Personal Development, I completed over 200 hours of strength and conditioning to strengthen my body and mind. I learned to trust the process because results are not immediate, and I worked my way up to a 4x4 total of 425 pounds. For Physical Fitness, I decided to improve my basketball skills and I.Q. With over 650 hours of individual training and film study, I improved my offensive and defensive efficiency. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five-night trip to Boston. I went to Hynes Center, Copley Square, toured Cambridge, and attended MIT's 2.009! The Congressional Award was an incredible experience that taught me how to be self-sufficient and truly make a difference in my community.

---

**Todd Christian**

*Huntsville, Texas*

*Advisor: Armando Aguirre*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

I volunteered hundreds of hours as the Youth Advisor Representative for the Host Team to prepare and deliver the transformative 26th Interamerican Scout Conference, a triennial gathering of the leadership of 33 National Scout Organizations spanning from Canada to Chile. As the Boy Scouts of America's most prestigious and rigorous training for young people, I served in varying integral roles on the staff of four National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience. Courses were held at Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico and the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia. Six times throughout 2014, 2015, and 2016, I set my sights to transform myself physically - relentlessly training to summit a high-altitude mountain, progressively more rigorous than the last. Each time, I helped others overcome their own challenges to achieve what they thought once impossible. For 10 days in December 2017, I completed an independent immersive study of Ecuadorian culture. During this trip, I met people from more than 30 countries, ate local cuisine, and participated in a number of cultural exchanges, including native dancing and producing chocolate from raw cocoa pods. On the journey to complete the Congressional Award, I learned the incredible value and benefit of critical self-reflection, as well as confiding in trusted advisors; thanks to the Congressional Award, I am a more whole leader.

**Paige Cromley**

*The Woodlands, Texas*

*Advisor: Margaret Paulsen*

I spearheaded a high school voter registration campaign across the state of Texas. By meeting with government officials and superintendents, I ensured that voter registration would occur in schools across the state. For Personal Development, I worked for my neighbor, house sitting as well as providing administrative support. For my Physical Fitness goal, I ran consistently between sports seasons to maintain my physical fitness and increase speed. By working out every day in the winter and summer, despite being off-season, I learned discipline and was able to stay healthy. Lastly, for my Exploration, I traveled independently, flying overseas to Scotland without my family. In the UK, I engaged in activities that took me outside my comfort zone.

---

**Ashley Gibson**

*The Woodlands, Texas*  
*Advisor: Stephine Raney*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I collected and refurbished over 500 used pairs of eyeglasses to donate to people in low income communities. I was able to network with people in my community and spread the word about my project. To complete my Personal Development goals, I attended weekly violin lessons, and practiced various techniques. Additionally, I participated in many musical concerts. To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I attended weekly golf lessons and practiced daily. During each practice I drilled on putting, chipping, and full swing. Additionally, I competed in a substantial amount of golf tournaments. To complete my Exploration goals, I canoed and camped around Fort Desoto's St. Jean Key. I explored different types of mangroves and looked for different species of birds. I enjoyed earning The Congressional Award because it helped me gain a better understanding of the world around me.

**Allison Sharer**

*The Woodlands, Texas*  
*Advisor: Jennifer Kaiser*

I learned a lot by volunteering at the hospital, where I took a book cart that I helped stock around to patient rooms. Most of these patients were having a really bad day, and I was proud to be a small part of making it better. For my Personal Development, I started pet-sitting for people in my neighborhood. I created a monthly calendar that helped me plan my schedule as well as keep a record of payment due. I also learned how to create a CV and used my new pet-sitting job experience. After competing in gymnastics for ten years, I spent the next year training to be a better track athlete. I worked to improve my 400m sprint time, but the hurdles were my main focus. I was very determined to compete at a 6A UIL meet, so I was very excited when I made the Varsity team as a freshman. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to explore an area of rural Wyoming. I loved the natural beauty of the area, but one highlight of the trip was speaking to the children at a local K-5 school about the value of service and how the Congressional Award was helping me do that. Accomplishing these goals this year made me become a more determined, competitive and hard-working person.

---

**Ashley Sharer**

*The Woodlands, Texas*  
*Advisor: Jennifer Kaiser*

I served several non-profits in my local community, where I assisted with various activities, such as stocking food pantries, calling bingo at senior centers, and assisting with pet adoptions. I also learned how to sew in order to make special tote bags for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. For my Personal Development, I took two test prep classes and worked with an English tutor, leading to an increase of over 200 points on my PSAT. I also learned how to technically and cleanly swim the butterfly swimming stroke and completed over 550 hours of training for cross country and track and field. I am proud of the personal bests I have achieved and the team contributions I have made in the 5K, 1 mile, and 800m races. I also learned how to triple jump and pole vault. My favorite part of my Congressional Award journey was planning and completing my Exploration. I enjoyed exploring the culture and history of two of Europe's capital cities, London and Paris. Going through this process has brought me the confidence and enthusiasm to do even more in the future.

**Emily Kate Mosley**

*Waco, Texas*  
*Advisor: Sarah Baranowski*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

In the process of earning the Gold Congressional Medal, I worked at my local library and partnered with Baylor University to provide STEM education for youth in my community. I also worked at Texas Presbyterian Hospital in women's healthcare to promote healthy living and explore related policy issues. For Personal Development, I researched current events and followed congressional votes as well as Supreme Court cases, investigating the ways in which the government's actions effect our daily lives. I also became involved various GOTV activities to promote civic and voter participation. For Physical Fitness, I worked to perfect my own dancing abilities so that I could teach classes to the younger girls trying out for my high school dance team. By combining physical fitness with leadership development, I was able to help aspiring dancers achieve their goals as well as reach my own. For my Exploration, I stayed with an Indian-Pakistani Muslim family and wore a hijab documenting xenophobia in the south. I also explored communities affected by travel bans and border policies in order to expand my understanding of the heated political climate around immigration and racial conflict. Earning such a prestigious award that requires such dedication has taught me that while in fearless pursuit of my own dreams, I can use my voice to empower others and make conscientious change in the world.

---

**Daniel Garza**

*San Antonio, Texas*

*Advisor: Veronica Benhalim*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, Special Olympics, US Air Force*

I achieved my Voluntary Public Service goal by volunteering with Texas Parks & Wildlife and the Texas Historical Commission. As a re-enactor, I portray a private in the U.S. Army circa the mid 1800's and educate the public regarding military life. I accomplished my Personal Development goal by working with the SAPD Public Safety Corp, where I learned the responsibilities of police officers. Additionally, I served as president of student council and Parliamentarian of the Texas Association of Student Councils which enhanced my leadership skills. I attained my Physical Fitness goal to run a sub five-minute mile by setting a PR of 4:53. I had the honor of serving my team as cross country captain for two years. For my Expedition, I planned an extensive road trip visiting the Dakota Wyoming area. I explored the national parks and the western expansion, which enhanced my living history activities. I was able to experience some of the most historic and majestic sites in America. I'll always carry the life lessons learned from this challenging experience.

**Hunter Beaton**

*Boerne, Texas*

*Advisor: John Peterson*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

IFor Voluntary Public Service, I created a sustainable means to continue a duffel bag and backpack donation for foster children that were being removed from their homes. To date, I have provided over 27,000 bags or backpacks to foster children throughout 14 states. Through my Day 1 Bags and Backpacks program, I needed to improve my ability in the public speaking arena. I did this by training as well as applying for Ted Talks throughout my area. I have played tennis for many years but had always had a first serve issue that I knew I needed to improve. I established a goal to practice my serves and have my coach monitor my first serve improvements over the course of years. I modified technique and practiced hours to improve. I love my Catholic Faith and it has always been a part of my life. I set a goal to visit missions in my community. I ended up being able to plan and experience a trip of a lifetime to the Vatican, see Pope Francis, and visit other religious sites throughout Europe. I have learned through my multi-year journey to achieve the Congressional Award Gold Medal that perseverance and grit kept my focus on the goal.

---

**Fernando L Miranda-Fred**

*San Antonio, Texas*

*Advisor: Twain Tharp*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I continued building upon my volunteer camp counselor commitments to help special needs campers experience traditional camping, I also enjoyed helping diabetic children attend Camp Independence. However, my biggest efforts, particularly relating to an extended time commitment, were undertaken at Haven for Hope shelter. I am interested in the world of business, so I undertook two significant projects to learn about budgeting and basic accounting. Building upon this self-directed learning, I was able to pursue an incredible internship at Valero Energy whereby I learned about the field of corporate social responsibility. While I have always enjoyed playing sports, through my Congressional Award Physical Fitness goals, I have become much more aerobically-fit and go to Lifetime Fitness four times a week. As a New American and appreciative of the opportunities to learn about different cultures in addition to my Hispanic heritage, I also undertook a great exploration of Midwest culture and our national parks whereby I helped restore some of the parks' trails. To-date, participating in our nation's Congressional Award program has helped me become more independent, adventurous, and appreciative of the great learning and educational opportunities to Americans and how we all can make a difference for individuals in need.

**Ben Romero**

*Kerrville, Texas*

*Advisor: Kurt Gaudette*

*Affiliations: Scouts of America*

My Voluntary Public Service goals were to support both the welfare of needy people and my local public library. I worked at the food pantry, supported Eagle Scout projects, and provided manual labor for the needy and elderly. Furthermore, I served at the library, working with children and providing administrative duties. My Personal Development goals were to learn the complex video system at my church and develop my skills on the French Horn. I became proficient on the \$85,000 video system, while leading the congregation through the Mass and potential emergency situations. Additionally, I took lessons and performed on my French Horn. My Physical Fitness goal was to improve my performance in preparation for the Air Force Academy's physical fitness test. My multi-faceted approach included pushups, sit-ups, running, biking, and hiking. In the end, I reduced my mile time by over 2 minutes. My Expedition was to participate in a high adventure Boy Scout camp. At Philmont, over the course of 12 days, I hiked over 80 miles and learned new skills such as tomahawk throwing, trail maintenance, black powder loading, and leadership as my crew Guia. This program gave me the ability to take responsibility for the mental, physical, and community aspects of my life.

---

**Siddhant Ahuja**

*Katy, Texas*

*Advisor: Atul Kothari*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

To earn my Gold Medal, I served over 400 hours at diverse organizations, including Interfaith Ministries and Boy Scouts of America. I created ten risers for two high school orchestras, providing infrastructure for them to grow and increasing visibility of musicians in the back of the orchestra. For Personal Development, I focused on improving as a musician by expanding my repertoire of Violin Concertos. I'm proud to have had the opportunity to perform in San Antonio as part of Texas' Best High School Orchestra. To improve my Physical Fitness, I trained for several months to run a Half-Marathon and complete the BP MS150, a 150-mile bike ride from Houston to Austin that raises millions of dollars of research funds for Multiple Sclerosis. Finally, for my Expedition, I trekked over 100 miles across the Rocky Mountains with a crew of 12 at Philmont Scout Ranch, applying the outdoor skills that I learned as a Boy Scout. The Congressional Award was an enriching experience that enabled me to pursue my individual passions while making impact to the greater community.

**Smriti Ahuja**

*Katy, Texas*

*Advisor: Atul Kothari*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service by engaging in numerous initiatives with several non-profits, my school, and Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston to organize events and service days impacting the Greater Houston communities. For Personal Development, I worked to improve my skills in argument and critical thinking by being on the debate and mock trial teams. Because of my experiences, I hope to pursue a career in law. I set up a goal to focus on Physical Fitness through eating healthy and exercising regularly and was able to lose 40 pounds to improve my overall health. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned and executed a service trip to India with ten youth for two weeks. My goal was to increase awareness about the circumstances that underprivileged children grow up in and to identify the areas to help them through those circumstances. The Congressional Award truly enhanced my life by teaching me perseverance and allowing me to serve the greater community.

---

**Sachi Kalvakaalva**  
*Pearland, Texas*  
*Advisor: Lata Krishna Rao*

For my Volunteer Public Service, I volunteered at the Houston Food Bank, the Children's Museum of Houston, Memorial Hermann Hospital, and the American Youth Leadership Foundation. Through each of these places, I was able to take a well-rounded approach to help out my community. In completing my Personal Development goal, I studied the classical North Indian dance form of Kathak. I regularly attended classes every week, practiced on my own, and performed at community events. Currently, I hold certificates at 3 levels from an accredited dance college in India. I trained to complete a 10K race for my Physical Fitness goal. To prepare, I focused on building my endurance, conditioning, and pushing myself by first running a 5K. I completed the whole 10K race in November under the qualifying time. I planned and executed a 6 day trip to Banff and Vancouver, Canada as part of my Expedition goal. Through this, I was able to improve my planning and coordination skills while overcoming logistical challenges. I was able to learn about a new culture and admire the natural beauty of the area. The Congressional Award has taught me the value of perseverance, hard work, and grit in everything that I do, making my Gold Medal journey extraordinarily rewarding.

**Shikha Lakhi**  
*Pearland, Texas*  
*Advisor: Ms. Binila Muthalaly*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

In partnership with my dance school, I initiated a program called HealthyMe and visited local daycare, libraries, dance studios and parks. I educated children under the age of 13 on how to lead a healthy lifestyle by teaching them importance of a healthy diet and enjoyable and simple exercises. I worked on improving my dance technique and stamina by practicing for at least 4 hours a week. Through this journey, I built my endurance and performed a two hour long solo dance performance with minimal breaks. After being diagnosed with high cholesterol levels as a thirteen-year-old, I wanted to reduce my cholesterol level to 170mg/DL through kickboxing and running. These activities helped me bring my cholesterol levels back to a healthy range, and developed a life long passion to kickboxing. I planned a trip to Gardena, California to explore and divulge myself into Japanese culture. I was introduced to a multitude of dishes, learned about Japanese-American history, with a focus on the internment camps Japanese-Americans, and the effects it has on modern society. The Congressional Award was an enriching experience that showed me the benefits of staying dedicated to my goal, and also gave me the opportunity to meet new people from various backgrounds and experiences, helping me grow as a person. I have gained a better understanding of who I am as a person and the overall impact every small action could take to improve our community. This journey has also developed my passion in kickboxing, healthy lifestyle, and community service.



---

**Raheem Memon**

*Katy, Texas*

*Advisor: Richard Guillen*

I completed over 800 hours of Voluntary Public Service at a local convalescent home and at a County Trauma Hospital. I worked in the psych ward and the emergency room interacting with doctors and patients. For Personal Development, I took Spanish lessons, practicing incessantly. Today I am fluent in Spanish and communicate with my soccer teammates and patients at my volunteering with ease. For Physical Fitness, I sharpened my soccer skills, graduating high school as the captain of the varsity team. Checks and balances within the framework of the Congressional Award made me cognizant of my weaknesses and enhance newly realized strengths. For my Expedition, I planned a nine-night trip to Europe. My brother and I used funds from a lifetime of birthday/Christmas gifts, to reward points from American Express and hotels, to where we spent nothing on this trip. As I walk away with a Gold Medal, I have acquired a lifelong commitment to volunteering, gained fluency in Spanish, became top notch in soccer, and learned about diversity and culture.

**Rehman Memon**

*Katy, Texas*

*Advisor: Richard Guillen*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 600 hours of Voluntary Public Service at a local convalescent home and at a County Trauma Center Hospital. I worked in a clinical setting, shadowing the doctors and interacting with patients and in the laboratory setting at the hospital. For Personal Development, I took Spanish lessons, and studied and practiced on my own. I am now a fluent Spanish speaker and serve as a translator at the hospital and convalescent home. For Physical Fitness, I honed and escalated my soccer skills being the first junior as the captain of the varsity team. For my Expedition I planned a nine-night trip to Europe. My brother and I used our own money from a lifetime of birthday and Christmas gifts to loyalty points from our parent's American Express and hotel reward points wisely, to where we spent nothing on this trip. The structure of the Congressional Award program instilled in me unparalleled discipline and my success has encouraged me to raise the bar on goals in all aspects of life.

---

**Rhea Mudnal**

*Pearland, Texas*

*Advisor: Harish Rao*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of service! Over the summer, I helped special-needs kids participate in summer camp activities, and I also volunteered at the Baylor St. Luke's hospital. During the school year, I helped to organize and conduct activities at the Children's Museum. For my Personal Development, I pursued the Spanish language. In doing so, I was able to delve into the Hispanic culture and become familiar with many of the holidays and traditions. For my Physical Fitness goal, I significantly improved my tennis serves. By practicing everyday and competing in tournaments, I was able to speed up my serves and consistently hit the corner of the service box, which made my serves more difficult to return. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a five day trip to Italy. I visited Venice, Pisa, Pompeii, Florence, and The Vatican. While there, I was able to learn more about Italian history and culture as well as see architectural marvels and sample delicious cuisines! Through the Congressional Award, I was able to reach out and touch the lives of so many different people, which has helped me to develop important life-skills and has enabled me to discover my passions!

**David Wang**

*Pearland, Texas*

*Advisor: Shixia Huang*

I volunteered at the Children's Association of Maximum Potential camp as a friend, counselor, and guardian for those with special needs. Volunteers are required to stay on campus for the entire duration and take care of campers from morning to evening. For Personal Development, I played percussion for the Houston Youth Symphony, which required extensive practicing of the snare drum, marimba, timpani, and other instruments. I also played for retirement homes. I ran long-distance, from the 1 mile to the half-marathon. My mile time cut down to 5 minutes and 22 seconds (as compared to 8 minutes and 5 seconds before I started running) and my half-marathon time fell below 2 hours. Visiting Chicago and St. Louis, I caught more than a glimpse of the highlighting qualities the Northwest has to offer. From the food to the landmarks, I discovered a lifestyle I had never imagined here in Houston.

---

**Mamoon Khalid**

*Irving, Texas*

*Advisor: Arif Kuniyil*

While working towards the Congressional Award Gold Medal, one of my most memorable experiences while volunteering was the time I spent at numerous hospitals. I helped re-instill hope in patients who felt hopeless and tended to their needs. For Personal Development, I participated in my local Toastmasters group. Through Toastmasters, I learned how to effectively communicate and inspire others. For my Physical Fitness portion, I joined a Tae Kwon Do dojo and consistently practiced day to day. Tae Kwon Do not only made me more physically fit but also improved my focus and determination in general. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned an eleven night trip to Canada. The experience as a whole taught me life lessons that I would never be able to learn in a classroom setting. Pursuing the Gold Medal was an invaluable experience that helped me grow in every aspect of my life, making me a more well rounded individual.

**Jana Sabri**

*Irving, Texas*

*Advisor: Jumana Alkhatib*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at different organizations that related to my passions. I focused mostly on education and non-profit organizations, volunteering at an ESL summer school, summer camps, and Amoud Foundation. For Personal Development, I took a karate and self-defense class every week, advancing all the way to a red belt. For Physical Fitness, I trained for and ran a leg of the BMW Dallas Marathon relay. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a four night trip to Washington D.C. While we were there, we viewed and learned about a plethora of American monuments, visited as many Smithsonian museums as possible, and explored the city. The Congressional Award was an incredible experience that has truly helped me grow as an individual and a leader. I am grateful to have been part of a program that has helped me find and pursue my passion for public service.

---

**Weronika Konwent**  
*Hamilton, Texas*  
*Advisor: Johnnye Gautier*

I helped to establish a Food Recovery Network at my college, working with partners in the community and administrators and students on campus to raise awareness about food waste and to direct the flow of food to areas and people who could make use of it. For Personal Development, I became relatively fluent in Spanish. This involved taking high school and college courses, participating in conversation classes and cultural activities, and traveling to the Spanish speaking countries of Costa Rica and Spain for full immersion. I became a consistent yoga practitioner, improving my strength, balance, and flexibility through group and individual practice. For my Exploration, I completed the Camino de Santiago de Compostela trail in Northern Spain, backpacking more than 500 km over the period of about a month. I learned about religion, culture, food, language, and met many Spanish and international people along the way. Participating in the Congressional Award program made me particularly thankful to have the opportunities to pursue self development, while realizing that we grow and learn in big and small ways every day.

**Matthew Mitchell**  
*Fort Worth, Texas*  
*Advisor: Steven Jackson*

To earn my Gold Medal, I completed 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service at Community Storehouse, an organization helping families in need. There I learned how many people in my community are struggling and need assistance. My two Personal Development goals were to improve my leadership skills and to learn to drive. I spent time teaching Taekwondo to children, adults, and special needs students and completed the training to successfully earn my driver's license. For Physical Fitness, I attended martial arts classes, studying both Taekwondo and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I earned my Second-Degree Black Belt in Taekwondo and received my Blue Belt in Jiu Jitsu. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to New Orleans where I learned about the city's food, history and culture. I also learned about the bayou and the threat hurricanes pose to the local ecosystem. The Congressional Award has been a life-changing experience, shaping me into a man who aspires to help others and who, hopefully, will also inspire others.

---

**Connor Crowe**

*Georgetown, Texas*

*Advisor: Calvin Gray*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

My primarily goal for Voluntary Public Service was to support my local community through beautifying outdoor spaces, maintaining local parks and recreational areas, and constructing sustainable structures for outdoor areas that could be utilized by the community for many years to come. One of my primary Personal Development goals has been to become a more effective leader and learn more about what it means to successfully lead through servant leadership and effective communication. I was able to primarily learn this through leadership roles in Boy Scouts such as Senior Patrol Leader. My Physical Fitness goals revolved around consistent practice, conditioning, and weight training to improve my strength, endurance, and agility in order to prepare myself to be able to perform successfully on the basketball court. Through my experience in Boy Scouts, I was able to participate in a 15 day backpacking trip to Philmont Scout Ranch, where I learned the true hardships of having to survive and travel through 95 miles of rugged backcountry wilderness with nothing but a backpack and the clothes on my back. One of the primary lessons I learned through my experience is that life can be extremely tough and challenging, but by working as hard as you can everyday towards your goals with confidence and positivity, you can overcome any obstacle or hardship.

**Grace Nemeć**

*Taylor, Texas*

*Advisor: Gwynetha Vrabel*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the USA*

For the Voluntary Public Service component, I participated in quite a bit of Scouting and many other leadership positions. These events included staffing at camps for younger Scouts, committing to at least one service project over Christmas break, and involvement in many other organizations. Regarding Personal Development, I took part in one of my local youth groups and stepping up to a leadership position in a speech and debate club. For Physical Fitness, I tried many different sports and work out strategies. A few of these included hiking, basketball, running, and weight lifting. Lastly, for my Expedition, I went to New Mexico, where I hiked for roughly two weeks in the back country.

---

**Wilson Sands**

*Dallas, Texas*

*Advisor: John Dżminiski*

For Voluntary Public Service, I worked within a service organization, Youth for West Dallas. I concentrated my service work in the West Dallas area, where I tutored kids, helped with youth camps and sports teams, lead drives for used sports equipment and school supplies, and did Meals on Wheels. For Personal Development, I developed specific fitness goals at a workout facility that I would like to open in the future. For Physical Fitness, I established specific goals to improve in lacrosse and eventually made DI Varsity team. Lastly, for my Expedition, I planned a fishing trip to research native trout in Northern New Mexico. This helped me identify, plan and execute specific goals that I want to achieve. Through the Congressional Award, I have gained a great sense of accomplishment in setting and achieving long term goals.

**Daimion Davis**

*Lehi, Utah*

*Advisor: Brett Nelson*

*Affiliations: Boys Scouts of America*

I provided service to assisted-living groups by going to their place of residence and performing the violin and singing for them. I performed for them and helped them have uplifting evenings of great entertainment and fun. I love acting and singing and wanted to participate in all school musicals while in high school to improve my acting and singing skills. For Personal Development, I tried out for every play and musical and was leads in "Robinhood," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Cinderella," and "Lion King." For Physical Fitness, I wanted to make USFSA Nationals in Pairs Figure Skating. I practiced figure skating 5 hours/5-6 days per week. Each Fall the competitions begin: qualification through Regionals, Sectionals, and then Nationals. I placed 7th at Nationals. Lastly, I planned and organized an Exploration trip to New York City, where I went to the musical "Hamilton." It was very inspiring for me and the man that played George Washington in the musical inspired me to tryout for "Cinderella," which I played Prince Charming. Because of the inspiration of the Congressional Award, I have accomplished and participated in many activities that I would not have done.

---

**Katie Drennan**

*Sandy, Utah*

*Advisor: Michelle Estrada*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I enjoyed making personal connections with kids as I served as a robotics tutor, mentor, and volunteer. I taught kids and adults more about robotics at events. I also fostered ten kittens recovering from calicivirus to help them regain their health and prepare for adoption. For my Personal Development, I helped to create a new way to find survivors in earthquake rubble via a network of controlled cockroaches, made a business plan and applied for a patent, and am now part owner of an LLC business producing portable bird scare devices. I have always wanted to be a good dancer because I love theatre, so for Physical Fitness, I worked on my dancing ability. This improved my technique and memory for choreography. I planned a four night camping Expedition to hike and explore various caves in Utah and Idaho. I now understand more scientific aspects of ongoing geologic changes and am more conscientious of the needs of bats and other cave creatures.

**Kim Drennan**

*Sandy, Utah*

*Advisor: Megan Theorine*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered as a robotics tutor, mentor, and teacher and at several FIRST Robotics competitions. I fostered kittens recovering from calicivirus to help them regain their health and prepare for adoption. For Personal Development, I improved my programming while preparing for and competing in FIRST Lego League, Cyber Patriot, participated in cyber security camp, python programming camp, arduino programming camp, and I've done my own programming with my arduino and raspberry pi. For Physical Fitness, I tracked my running time improvement, ran in 12 different 5k races and participated in Tae Kwon Do. I experienced life as a part of a Turkish family by staying at their house for a week and participating in their normal day to day activities. Through the Congressional Award Program, I have learned how to set goals, track my activities, and how to be comfortable in a large variety of places and scenarios.

---

**Fatima Faizi**

*Cottonwood Heights, Utah*

*Advisor: Sumeyye Guney*

*Affiliations: 4-H, Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

I volunteered with my Girl Scout troop, working on various projects such as working with Syrian refugees and gathering gifts for refugees to give during our religious holiday, Eid. I also volunteered at Davis hospital, gaining the experience of discharging patients and escorting them to their cars. For Personal Development, I attended my club meetings weekly for the College Mentorship and Leadership program. There, we worked on our Congressional Award, the ACT, and studied for classes as a group. One of the ways I earned some of my Physical Fitness hours was by taking a kickboxing class. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to San Diego, California. I researched some places to visit including Balboa Park, Old Town, Gaslamp Quarter and La Jolla Cove. Working towards the Congressional Award has been one of the most rewarding experiences because I gained leadership, planning, and personal development skills.

**Nihal Kariparduc**

*South Jordan, Utah*

*Advisor: Hulya Kablan*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at Emerald Hills Institute teaching Turkish to Russian-Turk kids. I helped organize, plan, and set-up events that take place at the Emerald Hills Institute. I also volunteered with my school's National Honor Society bimonthly. For Personal Development, I practiced my violin and guitar. I also attended my weekly College Mentorship and Leadership meetings and took practice ACT tests while preparing for college. I also learned how to secure a computer with Beehive Science and Technology Academy's all girl Cyber Patriot team. For Physical Fitness, I attended fencing classes every Thursday, physical exercises at least 3 times a week, and walked at least 8000 steps everyday. For my Gold Medal Expedition, I planned a trip to northern Utah and visited landmarks located within that area. The Congressional Award allowed me to follow through a goal for an extended period of time.



---

**Thomas Klingonsmith**

*Saratoga Springs, Utah*

*Advisor: Laura O'Connor*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

For my Gold Medal, I was able to give several hundred hours of service to Camp Maple Dell, teaching young men important outdoor skills to help them begin their progression through the ranks of Scouting. As part of my Personal Development goal, I was able to grow my skills in music by singing in my church's choir, as well as learning to play the euphonium. In Physical Fitness, I made a goal to strengthen my accuracy and precision in archery. I joined my high school's archery team and saw dramatic improvements of my score in state competitions. Finally, for my Expedition, I was able to complete a much-anticipated trip of touring every national park in Utah in one week. I explored each and in addition, saw several state parks, gaining more appreciation for the beauty of my state. Through this activity and others, earning the Gold Medal has truly been a fulfilling experience and I'm grateful for the opportunities and adventures it has presented me with.

**Sarah Shwani**

*Sandy, Utah*

*Advisor: Kristina Pavlovic*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at an elementary school, where I worked with teachers in the classroom and I specialized in working with special ed students. I helped them in the classroom and I made sure they stayed focused. This was a difficult task, however, I did learn a lot by working with the kids. For my Personal Development goals, I went to a Saturday camp almost every week to work and practice for my ACT test and to raise my score up a bit higher. I also practiced knitting and crocheting and tried to improve my skills. My Physical Fitness goal really changed my life. I benefited a lot from it. I decided that I should become healthier and start having daily workouts. This ended up changing my appearance and my life. I became so much more confident and up to this day, I still do my daily workouts. My Exploration was an eye-opening one. I went back to my home country, Iraq, and I explored my Kurdish culture. I went to two cities in Iraq; Dukan and Halabja. I got to explore the incidents that took place in Halabja, and I got to explore Dukan's beautiful scenery. While working towards my goals and earning the Gold Medal, I experienced the best things and I enjoyed every bit of it.

---

**Dua Azhar**

*Bluffdale, Utah*

*Advisor: Kristina Pavlovic*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered at my local library and through clubs at school. Volunteering at the library was a great experience because I've always loved books. At school, through National Honor Society and Student Council, I put together school events and activities. Through my Personal Development goals, I improved by writing style, my ACT score, and my high school resume for the future, including college and my career. I really wanted to gain experience and expertise to have good qualifications as I continue my education. My goal for Physical Fitness was to level up in figure skating for competitions, while staying fit and healthy in general. Putting together the hours for this goal allowed me to go up several levels in figure skating, learning many spins, jumps, footwork, and other advanced moves. For my Exploration, I visited Seattle, Washington. From this trip, I learned about Seattle, its history and culture, and it was also a great experience to learn how to be independent as I will soon leave for college. My overall experience in earning The Congressional Award was one that I truly enjoyed and learned from over the past couple years. Through all my goals, I have become a bigger and better person in society and hope to carry on the skills I developed as I continue my journey in life.

**Sami Kandil**

*Bristow, Virginia*

*Advisor: Ebuekir Balpetek*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered hundreds of hours at refugee communities, nursing homes, and homeless shelters, tutoring children, cooking food, gathering and distributing clothes and blankets, and offering every bit of help that was within my ability. For Personal Development, I held three jobs for a combined total of a little less than two years, through which I disciplined myself with my time and finances. With the money, I was able to assist in my college expenses and other costs that would've otherwise been a burden to my parents. For my Physical Fitness portion, I consistently worked out at least an hour a day, five days a week, for the past year. Through my commitment, I nearly doubled my consecutive pull-up rate, increased my max bench-press by over 50 pounds, and successfully completed my first three muscle-ups. For my Exploration, I founded, organized, and led a 6-member team on a 10-day journey to Burkina Faso. We raised over \$30K, with which we opened 3 water wells, supplied a village school with school uniforms, prepared and distributed 150 food packages, and donated toys and candy to the children. In my pursuit of The Congressional Award, I gained priceless knowledge and experiences on multiple aspects of life, developing myself as not only a student, but also as a contributing member of society.

---

**Ànnika Jenkins**  
*Virginia Beach, Virginia*  
*Advisor: Marguerite Alley*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

For Voluntary Public Service, I prepared and performed violin recitals throughout my community. My programs were designed to garner children's interest in learning a musical instrument, as well as to share a love of music throughout a number of hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes, theaters, and concert halls. For Personal Development, I pursued a dual canine training certification through the Animal Behavior Institute. My areas of study included animal minds and emotions as well as canine health, nutrition, behavior, and enrichment. For my Physical Fitness goal, I decided to conquer four new, challenging hiking trails. The culmination of my endeavor was a nine mile hike to the summit of Old Rag Mountain. For my Exploration, I planned a whirlwind international adventure. Over a summer, I travelled and performed throughout France, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Iceland. The Congressional Award was a powerfully unique experience that allowed me to hone my leadership skills and serve my community on a deeper level.

**Ciara Noelle Smith**  
*Chesterfield, Virginia*  
*Advisor: Tiffany Simoneaux*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

To fulfill the Congressional Award Voluntary Public Service requirements, I utilized my volunteer work with the Science Museum of Virginia as well as my community service hours gained building rehabilitation structures for a local wildlife foundation. For the Personal Development portion, I set the goal of reading 300 books in a two-year time span, setting certain parameters like minimum book length. The purpose of setting this goal was to build technical skills as well as gain exposure to new authors, perspectives, and thought processes. For my Physical Fitness, I learned weightlifting. I worked with a trainer to learn proper form and technique. I then used this knowledge to continue to gain strength as a solo lifter. To complete my Expedition, I traveled to Iceland with a few travel companions. This was an experience of a lifetime and I was able to cross off the number of items on my bucket list. I also learned valuable skills in traveling internationally independently.

---

**Kasey Mize**  
*Jeffersonton, Virginia*  
*Advisor: Barbara DeJarnette*

For Voluntary Public Service, I used my ability to sew to create dresses to donate to girls living in extreme poverty around the world. I also formed a sewing group which produced in excess of 200 dresses each year for this purpose. The dresses enable the girls to attend school and better their lives. I taught myself how to play guitar and worked to improve my keyboard skills to an advanced level for Personal Development. I practiced and used these skills to accompany my singing abilities and I joined a band to share my love of music. I increased my physical strength, fitness and endurance by training daily. I improved my 5K running time by 7 minutes and increased my soccer foot skills juggling record to 729. For my Exploration, I traveled to Barcelona, Spain for six nights to immerse myself in its culture by exploring its unique cuisine, architecture, dancing and historical background. I learned about the work of famous architect Antoni Gaudi and saw how his creativity separated Barcelona from other major cities. I am grateful to have had the opportunity, over the two and a half years I worked toward earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal, to continually challenge myself to become more independent, disciplined and goal oriented person.

**Melina Seng**  
*Fairfax, Virginia*  
*Advisor: Deborah Wooldridge*

*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

To achieve over 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service, I completed a five-year-long community service project with my Girl Scout troop: collecting, organizing, and then distributing books and stuffed animals to an underprivileged school in Washington, D.C. To complete my Personal Development goals, I attended numerous leadership conferences, such as the Northwestern Medicine and Health Care National Student Leadership Conference and the Brandeis Global Youth Summit on the Future of Medicine to develop my leadership skills and medical knowledge. For Physical Fitness, I joined my high school crew team freshman year with the intention of learning a new sport and staying active. However, I ended up enjoying rowing so much that I also joined a club team for a couple of the fall seasons and was on the varsity boat for two years. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned an “end-of-senior-year” trip to Greece with some of my friends in my Girl Scout troop. We went on a ten-day trip to the western coast of Greece, visiting cities such as Athens, Kalamata, Corinth, and many others while experiencing authentic culture every day. The Congressional Award was an unforgettable experience that truly made me step out of my comfort zone and enabled me to understand more about myself and others.

---

**Sarah Valley**

*Falls Church, Virginia*

*Advisor: David Gogal*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity*

I completed over 400 volunteer hours through rescue organizations, Scouting, and a STEM program. I helped to save the lives of more than a dozen dogs. I taught cub scouts wilderness survival skills at Goshen Scout Reservation, Camp PMI, and I taught kids how to code at Qualcomm Thinkabit Lab. For Personal Development, I got my first job at a local camera store where I worked as a sales associate and learned about the film developing process. I also experienced high adventure activities with my Venture Crew, like ropes courses, white water rafting, and rock climbing. For Physical Fitness, I played lacrosse at George Mason High School as well as joined a yoga studio where I did hot yoga. I also decided to play basketball through the McLean rec league, where I learned to work with a team. For my Gold Medal Exploration, I went to Santa Fe, New Mexico and explored the art, architecture, and culture of the area. While there, I volunteered to help build an adobe home through Habitat for Humanity. While earning the Congressional Award, I learned a lot about myself along the way and developed skills that will help me to be successful in the future.

**Anne R. Kickert**

*Leesburg, Virginia*

*Advisor: Bradley Burzumato*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, Youth Service America*

The bulk of my Voluntary Public Service was focused on founding of my non-profit, The Sunshine Brigade, which involves over 12,000 students in service to undeserved groups. I have also taken interest in helping the environment and became a beekeeper by starting my own apiary with 100,000 bees. For Personal Development, I explored entrepreneurship, developing a startup at MIT LaunchX and taught myself how to use CAD software, which helped me obtain a provisional patent. Additionally, I honed my passion for music, culminating in a solo performance at the Kennedy Center and performing in the 2018 Honor Band of America. I challenged myself physically by competing on my school's varsity crew team. I supplemented this with a regular yoga, chi-gong, and barre routine to cultivate a healthy balance of mind, body, and spirit. My Exploration afforded me the opportunity to investigate my Dutch heritage by traveling to the Netherlands to research ancestors who emigrated from Texel, a small island off the coast, in the late 1800s. Completing the Congressional Award has been a rewarding and special journey, albeit challenging at times. I began this journey my freshman year of high school, and it culminates in accordance with my senior year of high school. While reflecting upon this formative time as I prepare to enter into adulthood, I have recognized that the Congressional Award has been instrumental to uncovering and developing my identity.

---

**Varun Kota**

*Fairfax, Virginia*

*Advisor: John Lambeth*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered at Inova hospital system Friday from 3:30 PM to 6.00 PM for a period of two years. I also volunteered at the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department and provided my assistance whenever possible. To complete my Personal Development goals, I learned and took golf classes while also practicing weekly to improve my golf game. I also played for my school's golf team in order to hone my skills. Lastly, I worked towards earning my EMT license in order to provide care as the first responder. To complete my Physical Fitness goal of wanting to reduce my weight and to decrease my mile time from 9 minutes to 7 minutes, I ran on a treadmill for 30 minutes during the school days. Also, on the weekends I would run for an hour and push my body to its limits. To complete my Expedition, I charted out the routes and participated in BSA Philmont high adventure trek and coordinated out transportation plans. To prepare for out Expedition, I started hiking on some smaller trails before tackling harder and longer trails. I enjoyed my experience in earning the Congressional Award as it was one of my driving factors to accomplish these goals.

**Madeleine LeBeau**

*Chantilly, Virginia*

*Advisor: Karen Feldman*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

My Volunteer Public Service culminated in my founding a 501(c)(3), iWitnessed→iRemember, dedicated to connecting my generation to the everyday heroes who came together to win WWII. My programs are run nationwide, empower teens to contribute to their communities, and have honored hundreds of veterans. In addition to my passion to serve my community, I have a passion for bringing joy to the world through song. I was motivated to extend my vocal repertoire in both classical and musical theater and that work helped me win a national award from the largest nonprofit music organization in America. For Physical Fitness, I set a goal to engage in regular endurance training. Over several months, I gained sufficient stamina to hike the Alps on my Girl Scout troop's trip to the Girl Scout World Center, Our Chalet, in Switzerland. Finally, I learned so much from planning a cycling Expedition through 100-plus miles of changing terrain and 100-plus years of history along the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, including how to adjust to the unexpected and to appreciate what life was like for everyday Americans in earlier eras. Through the Congressional Award, I developed skills and confidence to accomplish whatever goals I set in the future.

---

**Samantha Lee**  
*McLean, Virginia*  
*Advisor: Steve Canales*

I volunteered for Second Story, formerly Alternative House, as a Youth Advisor Council member and by planning and creating snack packs for the youth who live there. Now, I create kits for those in need and keep them in my car to give out at red lights. For Personal Development, I created two triptychs on large, door-sized, wooden panels, exploring texture and color by using gesso and acrylic. I also visited widely-regarded, prominent museums in New York City, Paris, and Barcelona to experience how art feels and understand various artists' influence. For Physical Fitness, I ran after school, refereed youth basketball and lacrosse, and played lacrosse for my school and club team. Feeling lighter and more agile, I became more energetic and excited each day. Overall, I am now a faster runner and more physically active. For my Exploration, I traveled from McLean, Virginia to Barcelona, Spain to immerse myself in a Spanish-speaking country, improve my Spanish-speaking abilities, and increase my knowledge of Spain and its culture as well as learn about the Catalan language, visiting La Sagrada Familia, the Picasso Museum and Montjuic. Most importantly, the Congressional Award helped me realize I can set seemingly impossible goals and eventually, I will achieve them. My goals are now my reality and I continue to dream, imagining bigger goals in pursuit of my life goal: to make a positive difference in the world.

**Puja Punukollu**  
*Fairfax, Virginia*  
*Advisor: Ashley Kovachik*  
*Affiliations: American Red Cross, Honor Society*

For my Voluntary Public Service goals, I volunteered at the D.C. Veterans Affairs Medical Center. I completed administrative tasks and served our nation's heroes at the Mental Health Clinic, Research Lab, and other areas. My Personal Development goal was to pursue my career interest in healthcare. I joined my school's Health Occupations Students of America club. Through this club, I competed, attended seminars, and organized events as a state officer. For my Physical Fitness portion, I worked to increase my skills in my two favorite sports: soccer and tennis. I continued playing soccer while focusing on improving my defensive skills. For tennis, I was a four time varsity player and focused on improving the accuracy of my volleys. Lastly, I planned an Exploration to India. I visited several places including Varanasi, Jaipur, and Delhi. The Exploration allowed me to learn how to raise money to travel, and I was able to better learn about the history and culture of my Indian heritage. My experience in earning the Congressional Award has helped me learn so many skills that I can apply in daily life such as communicating efficiently, setting goals, and providing service.

---

**Timothy Rah**

*Burke, Virginia*

*Advisor: Jason Wheatley*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

I partnered up with an organization called Global Youth Mission (GYM) to provide help to places that are in need of aid. Specifically, I went to Mexico to support orphans in orphanages and went to homeless shelters to help those in need. I started playing the violin four years ago and have been honing my skills since then. Violin was the first instrument I dedicated my time into, and my skills have significantly improved since I started the Congressional Award Program. Soccer has always had a place in my heart as it increases my teamwork while providing a fun experience. There are many areas where a player can improve in, but I focused on my passing accuracy. With many hours of practice, my passes hit the mark 80% of the time, which is a drastic improvement. For my Expedition, I traveled to Arizona. Specifically, my journey led me to its many caves and caverns. Because of its diverse geography, I was able to learn and uncover the earth's mineral wonders. The Congressional Award has helped me bolster my dedication towards my daily activities and helped me understand that anything is possible.

**Kayla Rothstein**

*Springfield, Virginia*

*Advisor: Pamela Kipps*

*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA, National Honor Society*

I spent a substantial amount of time serving as the Student Representative for the Fairfax County Commission for Women and working with the special needs community. Also, I volunteered through the Smithsonian Institution and my local homeless shelter, ECHO. For Personal Development, I spent over 800 hours developing my performing art skills by participating in shows, directing, choreographing, and taking voice lessons. To develop my Physical Fitness, I took tap dance class and improved my techniques as well as improved my long distance running time. The Exploration part of my award was spent planning and traveling to Thailand. I spent time with my family, enjoying the local culture, including visits to Buddhist temples and historic sites. The Congressional Award allowed me to explore my passions and work towards my goals.



---

**Hailey Farrington**

*Redmond, Washington*

*Advisor: Paula Peterson*

To pursue my Gold Medal, I contributed hundreds of hours of volunteer work at my local food bank. The work that I did there helped ensure that over 4,000 underprivileged members in my community were able to access the resources (food, necessities, etc.) they needed to provide for their families. For Personal Development, I took weekly piano lessons and practiced on my own. I am now an intermediate pianist, and enjoy playing classical and new age music. For Physical Fitness, I trained for a local Hot Chocolate 5K/15K race. I started with short distances, and worked my way up to the distance of the race. Finally, for my Exploration I planned a five day trip to Manhattan. I experienced the city through the historical landmarks, food, architecture, and a Broadway show. Through the Congressional Award, I have learned the value of public service, challenging myself, and being willing to step out of my comfort zone. I am very grateful for the experience.

**Sarah Stewart**

*Redmond, Washington*

*Advisor: Paula Peterson*

I had the opportunity of volunteering at a variety of different places from sorting food at a foodbank to building a meeting tent for refugees in Ecuador. I had the opportunity to try new things like working on a graphic design team and becoming a note taker, while developing a strong work ethic in the process. For Personal Development, I was able to develop my painting and photography skills, improve my crocheting, work in a new environment, and increase my piano skills, eventually being able to play for my church. This was definitely the easiest category for me to complete since I have a lot of interests and hobbies. For Physical Fitness, I challenged myself to run longer distances, bike more miles, improve my basketball skills, and branch out with CrossFit. I was able to travel to Ecuador for three weeks and see another culture up-close. I got to go down into the jungle and experience life with natives in a world so different from my own. I pushed my comfort zone by traveling as a minor, trying new foods, and attending a youth Spanish conference. I was pushed out of my comfort zone many times while completing the Congressional Award, developed useful and practical skills, became more physically fit, and persevered through the many hours of volunteer service. I have been able to meet so many interesting people, make lots of connections, and discover more about the world other than what we may see from the surface.

---

**Trevor McArthur**

*Spokane, Washington*

*Advisor: Alyssa Nagai*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

For my Voluntary Public Service, I did a number of things, ranging from building off the grid homes to life guarding. The thing that I did the most was three trips to Bend, Oregon, where I helped build off the grid housing for a church, where people can practice mindfulness in the peace of the desert. For my Personal Development hours, I mostly got them from my job as a local barista. I also participated in drivers education, life guarded in the community, gardened, and started a small yard work service in my neighborhood. Additionally, I participated in 4-H Know Your Government for two years. For my Physical Fitness, I already lead an active lifestyle, so I recorded all of my bike rides, varsity high school tennis activities, walks, and even participated in a doctoral study in the summer which encouraged physical fitness in many different avenues. For my Expedition, I planned and executed a trip down to the northwest coast. I led a group of kids and adults through beaches, forests and rocky areas. We visited Indian reservations and museums, in order to learn about where we were exploring. We also looked at tide charts and timed our hikes. The Congressional Award has provided me with an invaluable experience that has taught me perseverance, time management, and skills that will enable me to accomplish my future goals in life.

**Phillip Wang**

*Bellevue, Washington*

*Advisor: Janet Towne*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours, primarily through work in civic service and education. I worked with my city's youth government program to host community events and outreach to other youth in my city. For Personal Development, I took Chinese language classes every weekend and studied on my own. These courses gave me a deeper connection to my cultural roots and I gradually learned how to not only speak, but to read and write in the Chinese language as well. For my Physical Fitness, I worked to hone my technique in competitive swimming to qualify for higher-level competitions. I trained in and out of the pool almost daily, and have seen my times improve greatly as well as qualifying for many more events. Finally, for my Exploration, I planned a trip through three select cities to learn more about the significance of our history, culture, and geography. While hiking one day, I learned about the natural flora and fauna that thrived in a certain region, and how our migrations changed these places. The Congressional Award was truly a magnificent experience that taught me self-discipline and helped me to discover my passions, of which I will carry into college and the future.

---

**Rose Wittenmyer**  
*Bellevue, Washington*  
*Advisor: Cindee Stewart*

In earning my Gold Medal, I did a variety of service projects including making dolls for kids in Guatemala, serving foster children, and helping in summer schools. My favorite opportunity was starting a knitting club with my choir that now knits hats yearly for homeless men in the Bellevue area. For Personal Development, I vastly improved my harp playing technique and abilities. I enjoyed preparing for an international harp competition, as well as becoming a Seattle Youth Symphony harpist. For Physical Fitness, I decided to do karate. I trained 1-5 times a week and ended up earning the Joshua Williams Award for the best black belt. For my Expedition, I had fun taking ten teenagers to Boundary Dam for a 5-day waterskiing trip. We outran bees, learned history behind the Pend-Oreille river and mines, and admired the beauty of creation. I really enjoyed how the Congressional Award helped me keep my eyes open for opportunities to explore, grow, and better serve people.

**Olivia McClain**  
*West Bend, Wisconsin*  
*Advisor: Nate Shubat*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

In pursuit of the Gold Medal, I was inspired to dig deeper into my community. My favorite volunteer experiences were spent leading a camp experience for children at a nature center, tutoring refugee children in Milwaukee, and meeting locals at the food pantry near my house. At age sixteen, I started my own photography business with my twin sister. Since then, we have done countless senior sessions and multiple weddings, growing in our technical and management abilities each year. Photography has always been a creative outlet for me and now it is also profitable. After suffering a muscle condition and major surgery that made me unable to run for a year and a half, my Physical Fitness goal focused on getting back to my former abilities as a passionate runner. I trained for and completed a half marathon, which was one of the most triumphant moments of my life. Having been dreaming of days spent in Paris since I was little, I was ecstatic to finally flex some French-speaking muscle and verify (or dismantle) my previous school-based understanding of French culture in France for a summer! I learned so much while becoming a part of my host family. The Congressional Award is much more than a medal or a checklist; so many of my most formative experiences in the last couple years were put in to action because of this program and I am forever thankful for that.

---

**Alice Katherine Attebery**

*Laramie, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Meredith McLauhlin*

I was a member of FOA and through this group I did various community service events, mostly for community youth. For Personal Development, I spent time doing a great deal of self reflection through a journaling process to help me realize what goals are important to me. For Physical Fitness, I had a medical condition which caused loss of strength so I focused on rebuilding my strength through endurance exercises. Lastly, for my Exploration, I went on a service trip to Croatia where I was able to help others while learning about a different culture. While there I attended a youth leadership conference which connected me to like-minded peers from around the world. I feel like I have grown not only intellectually and culturally through this experience. It has also empowered me to reach high for my goals and have more self confidence as I embark on my adult life.

**Mercedes Bartels**

*Burns, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America, National Honor Society*

I participated in Boy Scout volunteering opportunities such as Cub Scout Day Camp and conservation activities through my Venture Crew. I have also been the president of my Venture Crew for a couple of years, so I also helped to run meetings. Through NHS, I also participated volunteering activities. I practiced piano and singing for my Personal Development. Every week, I would try to dedicate at least an hour to sitting at the piano to practice or working on some exercises for singing. Both benefitted me greatly as I love to perform and ensure I continued to improve. I also completed some of my Physical Fitness goals through Venture Crew doing activities like rock climbing, hiking, and backpacking. However, I completed the majority of my time by competing and practicing for golf tournaments during the summer, spring, and fall as it is my favorite sport to play. For my Expedition, I helped to plan and execute trainings for Boy Scouts during a 6 day and 5 night camp which worked alongside the 2019 Cub Scout Day Camp. I trained the boys in Leave No Trace, campsite etiquette, and appropriate camp jobs over those days. I also helped to run a mock campsite for my Expedition. The Congressional Award exposed me to like-minded people and enabled me to not only benefit myself, but others through community service and getting others involved.

---

**Alyssa Bedard**

*Rock Springs, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Laura Schmid-Pizzato*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I volunteered in my community and state through our local Cowboy's Against Cancer program, my High School's Make a Wish Campaign, and the Wyoming Congressional Award Council's Youth Service Retreat. My Personal Development goal was to improve my leadership skills. I served as the Vice President of my class for the past three years, planning various school and community activities. For Physical Fitness, I earned Varsity letters and received All-Conference/All-State recognition the past two soccer seasons, led the state of Wyoming in scoring last season with 33 goals, was nominated for the Gatorade Player of the Year Award, and verbally committing to play Division 1 Soccer for the University of Wyoming. I planned and organized a five-day, four-night trip to Zion National Park in completing my Gold Medal Expedition. The highlight of the trip was a hike through The Narrows. I have learned that through hard work and dedication, I can achieve my goals. I will always value my participation in the Congressional Award Program.

**Sydney Bell**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at the Laramie County Library by helping in various youth programs. I was also an outdoor track manager for my high schools outdoor track team and helped the coaches out. Lastly, I was a member of Mariachi 307, a Mariachi band at my school, and we played at many community events. For Personal Development, I played my violin in the Cheyenne Fiddle Orchestra. I memorized the songs that we played on our float in the Cheyenne Frontier Days parades and at the beginning of rodeos. I also learned how to drive and gained experience by driving my parents around. For Physical Fitness, I tracked my steps by using my Fitbit and accomplished my goal of getting 10,000 steps everyday and getting at least thirty minutes of physical activity. Lastly, I planned a 5 day 4 night expedition to South Dakota and stayed at the Mount Rushmore KOA Palmer Gulch campground and resort. My family and I camped in a tent and visited many tourist attractions in the area, including Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse. Through this program, I learned that hard work really does pay off in the end.

---

**Makaylah Berkovitz**

*Rawlins, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Judy Stepp*

I volunteered through both my local and state's student council. I was the Wyoming Association of Student Councils president and our local student body president. We organized activities to raise money for Make-A-Wish and hosted blood drives and other activities for our community. For Personal Development I had two goals over my course in Congressional Award; to build my communication skills through serving and to learn more about art history and the techniques that they used on their pieces. I wanted to find the best way to communicate with people that I possibly could. For Physical Fitness, I found ways to push myself in everything, including running or weightlifting. I wanted to push myself to be able to move past my limits. I practiced every single day to build my strength and run faster to complete my goal of getting a 21 minute 5k time. To complete my goals for my Expedition, I went to the Black Hills of South Dakota to study the geological formations and the rich fossil deposits there. I used this to help me in my competition for Science Olympiad the next school year. This amazing program opened my eyes to see all the possibilities that are opened when we give back to those who give to us.

**Madison Bindl**

*Fort Bridger, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Laura Schmid-Pizzato*

For my Voluntary Public Service activities I organized an eyeglasses drive and a Christmas giving tree. With the eyeglasses, I collected the glasses, cleaned them, and donated them. For the Christmas gifts, I collected, wrapped, and delivered the gifts to families in need in my community. For my Personal Development, I concentrated on improving my baking and cooking skills by making new recipes. As I prepare for college, being able to cook and bake are two vital skills I needed to master. I centered my project on making simple, delicious, and healthy food. For my Physical Fitness, I trained to complete an 8-mile hike around Alligator Lake. This was definitely a challenge, but I was dedicated to improving my physical health even if it was difficult. After a few months of training I was able to complete the hike with ease. For my Expedition, I organized a 5-day, 4-night camping trip for my family and I. The goal of the trip was to connect with nature and enjoy time away from technology. The week was filled with hiking, biking, and many more adventurous activities. Overall, the Congressional Award has really shown me the impact my actions have on other people, myself, and my community as a whole. Through this program, I have learned a lot about myself and the value of working hard to achieve my goals.

---

**Abigael Bylow**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

For Voluntary Public Service, I have been involved in choir, orchestra, and Strolling Strings. I was a student aide for Deming-Miller Elementary School, working in a 2nd grade class. Additionally, during July, I was a volunteer for Cheyenne Frontier Days, helping with concessions, tickets, the Indian Village, and the Challenge Rodeo. My Personal Development goal was learning how to cook; my favorites were pork fried rice, beef kabobs, and rib roast. I also took personal voice lessons at Laramie County Community College. My voice lessons included vocal warm-ups and singing in vibrato; in Italian, German, and Spanish. For Physical Fitness I walked 30 minutes a day to improve and maintain my overall health; increasing my cardiovascular fitness. I chose to walk from the bus stop to my home, and I took my four dogs for their cardiovascular exercise. My Exploration was to California, exploring different geological landmarks such as the Great Salt Lake, Lake Tahoe, Castle Air Force Museum, and Carnegie Museum. One highlight was to hold a handful of unrefined salt from the Great Salt Lake. Another highlight was learning the history of WWII planes. I feel that the most important experience of the Congressional Award was the Voluntary Public Service.

**Elijah Cole**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

I volunteered in my community at Calvary Chapel Cheyenne by running sound during community engagement events such as blood drives and food drives. Additionally, I led games for AWANA. For Personal Development, I learned how to drive and received my license. Almost every day, I drove my family to and from places, so that I was able to receive my license. I learned to drive safely around our community. For Physical Fitness, I worked towards running a sub 2 hour half marathon. While I didn't quite achieve my goal, I ran a personal best of 2:02:56. In addition, I competed on my high school golf team. My goal was to shoot in the seventies on average. My average is currently 78.4. For my Expedition, I went on an eight-night and eight-day Bighorn Sheep hunt in the Washakie Wilderness near Cody, Wyoming. This was a new experience for me as I had never and probably will never again draw this tag in my life. I enjoyed the planning of the hunt as well as the hunt itself. The Congressional Award program has shown me that anyone can change their community for the better and that an individual's hard work can pay off in great ways.

---

**MyKenzie Dean**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

I volunteered at Cheyenne East High School, where I was a part of the Marching Band as the low brass section leader. I went to practice every morning and marched in parades throughout Wyoming. I also helped out with a lot of things around Cheyenne when people needed help. For Personal Development, I wanted to be able to read two books a month, so every chance I had I was reading. I am now reading 3-4 books a month. For Physical Fitness, I walked as much as I could every day. My goal was to get in 10,000 steps everyday and ended up with at least 14,000 a day. Lastly, I planned a trip to Bowling Green, Kentucky, where I went and saw quilt barns and also old churches and cemeteries. My overall experience was amazing and I learned how to be independent and to be able to push myself to help out more in the community.

**Noah Dreiling**  
*Laramie, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Meredith McLaughlin*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I directed traffic for the Laramie Community's Trunk or Treat, set up and took down equipment for soccer competitions, and volunteered at the Cheyenne Botanical Gardens. I also was part of a fundraising team which helped students attend an International Youth Summit in Rijeka, Croatia. For Personnel Development, I served as the local DECA Chapter President and worked on improving my performances to qualify for the International Career Development Conference. This year I qualified in the Individual Entrepreneurship Series Event. For my Physical Fitness goal, I challenged myself to increase my strength and conditioning. I achieved this goal by taking a weight lifting class and lifting after school. For my Expedition, I participated in a 5 day, 4 night backpacking trip from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. I helped plan, pack, distribute and carry all our food, water, and supplies. This unforgettable trip pushed my endurance and confirmed how much one can achieve with diligence and discipline. The Congressional Award has allowed me to have diverse experiences which have changed my perspective and how I might continue to serve in the future. I will continue to use the skills I learned throughout my life.



---

**Abigail Fearneyhough**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity, National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I made tie blankets for the Linus project and Laramie County Blankets for Kids. Through Future Business Leaders of America I planned, organized, and ran an “Action for Autism” 3v3 basketball tournament. I also volunteered for the Wyoming State Fair, performing a variety of needed activities. For Personal Development, I challenged myself to read literature in all genres. I also learned how to write business plans which included industry analysis, identifying potential risk and target markets, financial aspects of the business, and other necessary elements. To complete the Physical Fitness requirement, I participated in varsity basketball and soccer at Cheyenne Central High School. I also participated in basketball for Hastings College. For my Exploration, I planned a family vacation to Washington DC. I had not been to Washington DC, so we toured the monuments and various historical museums around the city. We also got to watch the Changing of the Guard at Arlington Cemetery and tour the Capitol. The Congressional Award has enriched my life in so many ways and I believe that it is a worthwhile endeavor; I would encourage every young individual to pursue it.

**Emma Geringer**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

I volunteered at my local hospital in the gift shop and in the maternity ward so that I could be exposed to a hospital setting while helping others. Another experience I had for volunteering was on my service trip to Haiti. I got the opportunity to help with a food distribution and play with kids. For Personal Development, I participated in Speech and Debate for two years to gain more confidence in public speaking. In order to accomplish this goal, I went to multiple tournaments and got help from my coaches. I also worked on gaining more skills on my guitar by taking lessons to prepare for a talent show. In order to make my Physical Fitness more fun and diverse, I spent a lot of time exercising outdoors. I went on hikes, went white water rafting, and went cross country skiing in the winter. Another goal that I accomplished was learning how to cook healthy meals to learn more cooking skills. I spent a lot of time planning my family road trip to Yellowstone National Park and Custer, South Dakota. The itinerary I made consisted of lots of outdoor activities to see more of nature. My favorite part of the trip was rafting down the Yellowstone River after walking through the geyser basins. Earning The Congressional Award has been my proudest accomplishment because I have gained many skills that will help me with my future, and I am very thankful for this opportunity!

---

**Andrew (AJ) Gronning**  
*Casper, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Chase Olsen*  
*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

To earn the Gold Medal, I have volunteered at Kelly Walsh High School for over 300 hours by serving as the manager for the Varsity football, basketball, and track teams this year. I was the mascot for the Valentine Speedway in Glenrock and this past year I had the chance to race my own car as part of my Personal Development. With my school group this year I had the privilege of working over 20 hours to help the local rescue mission sort donations for the holiday food drive as well as a local food distribution center that assembles backpacks for students that face food insecurity on weekends and school breaks. I also had the opportunity to forge new friendships with peers from a high school in another school district through email and various activities in both our communities. For my Physical Fitness I continue to work out several days a week at the Recreation Center and the local YMCA to keep my heart strong and healthy after undergoing open-heart surgery in 2016. I will also participate in the area and state games of Special Olympics basketball competition later this spring. My Exploration trip was to Florida, where I was challenged to travel without an escort. While in Florida I went fishing, swimming, go-cart racing as well as attending several concerts. By participating in this program, I have explored new challenges I would never have had the confidence to try before. Thank you for the opportunity to travel, meet new people, and to be a part of this program once again.

**Logan Grosz**  
*Torrington, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Dawn Coxbill*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

To earn the Congressional Award Gold Medal, I completed over 560 hours of Volunteer Public Service at the Children's Hospital of Colorado. I also learned how to knit so I could make hats for babies in the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit). For Personal Development, I wanted to improve my cattle ownership knowledge by participating in educational classes and demonstrations put on by the Goshen County Supreme Cow Program. The program taught me the basics of owning and running my own cattle operation. For the Physical Fitness portion, my goal was to get back into shape after being sick for a few years. I wanted to be able to run a mile. In order to achieve this, I exercised every day for at least thirty minutes. I was able to exercise my 4-H and FFA animals at the same time. For my Expedition, I planned a five-night camping trip in the Medicine Bow National Forest in the Snowy Range Mountains, Wyoming. While camping, my dad and I went fishing, hiking, and ATV riding. I also was able to spot different species of wildlife in their natural habitats. In earning the Congressional Award, I learned how I can impact not only myself but others around me. I have learned so many new friends and pushed myself to better myself and my community.

---

**James Hayes**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

I volunteered with a local church, a local car dealership, NEEDS, and other organizations as a part of my school's FBLA chapter. As a part of helping these organizations, I have organized events, collected and organized food donations, served food to the elderly, and much more. For Personal Development, I served as a member and officer of East High FBLA, organizing meetings, planning trips, arranging sponsorships and participating in competitive events. I also competed in Wyoming Academic Challenge competitions, qualifying once for the East High State team and twice for the All-Star playoffs. For Physical Fitness, I learned to play golf and developed my skills through my high school golf team. I planned my FBLA chapter's National Leadership Conference trip to Baltimore, Maryland. On this trip I planned activities to learn about Edgar Allen Poe, ocean life, seafood, the Baltimore Orioles, and Babe Ruth.

**Sydney Holles**  
*Laramie, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Meredith McLaughlin*  
*Affiliations: Girl Scouts of the USA*

I volunteered with Laramie Animal Welfare Society, helping to socialize the cats and clean their kennels. I learned how to be responsible for something other than myself. I also learned how to read emotions when working with the cats, which translates into how to read human emotions. As an active member of my Girl Scout troop, I helped to conduct fundraisers and participated in Journey's. We held many fundraisers to take a trip to London and Paris, including a stop to Pax Lodge - World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. Through Journey's, I have learned how I want to change the world. For Physical Fitness, my goal was to qualify for High School Swim State in the 100 breast. I dropped my time, but I missed my goal. I was diagnosed with Vocal Cord Dysfunction and was able to overcome it by learning new breathing techniques and implementing the techniques in practice. For my Exploration, I traveled to Germany for a month, living with a host family for three weeks in the Bavaria Region and spent a week in Berlin. Experiencing a new culture and food was something I will never forget. While I was there, I had to deal with my anxiety without my family there to help me. I learned how to set goals, how to achieve them, and how to deal with the disappointment and frustration when I don't achieve my goals.

---

**Belle Houseman**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

*Affiliations: Habitat for Humanity*

East High School provided me with volunteering opportunities from helping at elementary school carnivals to helping with charity organizations. The East High School student council was also a huge help with volunteering. We did several activities to help our community. For Personal Development, I have improved my skills through a part time job. I learned skills such as being hard working and what it means to be a leader. It also taught me how to be fast and follow directions with a smile on my face. I achieved my Physical Fitness goal through home videos and improving my mile time. I spent an hour a day on exercise videos at home. In addition, I ran a mile several times a week to decrease the time it takes. For my Exploration, I visited France for a week. This trip helped me understand a culture very different from my own. It was an amazing opportunity that has inspired me to travel and explore more cultures. The Congressional Award drove me to explore outside of my comfort zone and I have learned and experienced many things that I would not have originally.

**Lane Hutchison**

*Green River, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Laura Schmid-Pizzato*

*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

I spent many hours volunteering with the Backpack program, “Meals For Kids,” where I delivered food to families who cannot afford to eat on the weekends. Also, I have spent many hours working with the National High School Finals Rodeo. For Personal Development, I worked with the backpack program by getting information from the elementary schools and shopping and planning the meals for each week. Physical Fitness was the easiest to achieve due to my love for athletics. I lifted weights everyday and practiced basketball for at least two hours each day, getting in various cardio. For my Exploration, my mother and I went to Los Angeles for five days and four nights. On this trip, we went to many historical sights and beaches. Through this program, I learned to put others before myself and to always lend a helping hand to those in need. Also, hard work does pay off.

---

**Caroline Johnson**  
*Gillette, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Cinnamon Lenheart*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

I put in multiple hours at 4-H camp to help kids gain leadership skills and help develop their team building skills. Another project that I did was doing a Can- Creation project where we had to have a certain amount of non-perishable food items to make a creation. For Personal Development, I took multiple hours out of my day to better improve my piano playing skills. With the help of my teacher, I managed to go to level 4 piano book. Along with that I also improved my violin skills. Mrs. Edwards, my orchestra teacher, pushed me to be able to play very advanced song on my violin. To further advance my archery skills I started to go to the archery range more and improved my ability of shooting at the 20 yard line. Additionally, I went to my outdoor shooting range and I placed a small target at 50 yards and figured out how to shoot it from a distance with a 20 yard pin. To complete my Expedition, I decided to go on a trip to Idaho. On this trip we went through Montana for sight-seeing and to not get hit by the snow storm in Utah. We stayed in the same motel going there and coming back. While in Idaho we stayed with my Uncle and his family. My overall experience in the Congressional Award was the most challenging but the best time in my life.

**Jayla Johnson**  
*Casper, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Chase Olsen*  
*Affiliations: Key Club, National Honor Society*

I volunteered at the Wyoming Foundation for Cancer Care to help run fundraisers, events, and activities. I also volunteered through my school's Key Club in which I would volunteer for clothing and food shelters. I then would volunteer at my school by managing our varsity volleyball team. For Personal Development, I worked to grow my driving and script writing skills by practicing in my free time and using resources to further my skills. By continuing to practice, I earned my driver's license and I entered two of my films, by which I wrote, into the Wyoming Student Film Festival. I have furthered my Physical Fitness by playing golf, basketball, and track in high school while continuing to push my bench weight from 65 lbs. to a 95 lbs. As a result, I reached my bench goal and have been on varsity for all three sports. For my Exploration, I prepared for an eight day international trip to Austria. I had never been outside of the United States and traveling to Europe was a truly great experience. I learned about a new culture and was luckily prepared for the changes it brought me. The Congressional Award pushed me to new experiences and sometimes uncomfortable situations but I grew as a person and as a student. By working hard to achieve the Gold Medal, I realized working hard for your goals is worth it in the long run.

---

**Katie Johnson**

*Casper, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Chase Olsen*

*Affiliations: Big Brothers Big Sisters, Key Club, National Honor Society*

Volunteering for the Congressional Award gave me the opportunity to meet people that enriched my relationships and life. The award also reinforced my idea that service is the basis of a fulfilling life. For Personal Development, I learned about leadership through books such as *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, *Lean In*, *Daring Greatly*, *The Audacity of Hope*, *Master of the Senate*, and *Profiles in Courage*. After reading the books, I discussed ideas from the books to gain additional perspectives. For my Physical Fitness goal, I wanted to run faster in the mile. Over the course of the two years, I improved my mile time by nearly two minutes. Finally, for my Expedition, I planned a trip to Salida, Colorado with my extended family. The most rewarding experience that the Expedition provided was the feeling of accomplishment when I summited the second highest mountain in the continental United States, Mount Elbert. The Congressional Award fundamentally changed the way that I look at leadership, overcoming serious obstacles, and the community at large.

**Makala Johnson**

*Gillette, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Cinnamon Lenhart*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

I served my community through my many extracurricular activities, such as FFA, 4-H, National Honor Society and Student Representatives. I helped at my local soup kitchen and animal shelter by making dog toys and cat beds. I also helped with a Seat Belt Awareness at my school this past fall. I have been playing the piano since I was five. For Personal Development, I set goals for practicing and performing. I played at our hospital during Christmas time for the patients and staff that came down to the lobby for that hour. For Physical Fitness, I made a goal to walk at least 10,000 steps each day. I achieved this by parking further away at public places and taking a walk in the evening when it was nice with my dogs and my family and friends. For my Exploration, I went to Hawaii with my best friend for a senior trip. Her brother lives there and we went to visit. I got to sight see and learn a lot about the Polynesian culture. Through the Congressional Award, I have learned a lot about myself as a leader and about my community. I found so many more ways to help my community thrive, which helps me grow as a person as well.

---

**Lorin Jones**

*Rock Springs, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Marianna Pizatto*

I volunteered for several organizations throughout Wyoming including; Urban Renewal Agency, Cowboys Against Cancer, NHSFR, Make-a-Wish Foundation, RSHS Student Council and the Food Bank. I also attended two summer retreats where we helped in several different locations across Wyoming. I practiced my sewing, cooking and driving skills to complete the Personal Development portion of the program. For my Physical Fitness portion, I practiced regularly on my dancing and tennis skills to become more proficient as an athlete. I researched, planned and navigated for a trip to San Francisco, CA. I was lucky enough to have the former state WCAC Executive Director on my Expedition! This program has offered me many amazing opportunities to step outside my comfort zone and I have made many new friends from around the state of Wyoming.

**Michaiah Jones**

*Elk Mountain, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Trista Ostrom*

*Affiliations: 4-H, Big Brothers Big Sisters, National Honor Society*

I volunteered with the Laramie Foster Closet and the Laramie Animal Welfare Society, serving children in foster care and advocating for animal rights. I served as the Volunteer Coordinator for both organizations, developed a youth program, and also planned numerous awareness and fundraising events. For Personal Development I created my own charitable business, Giving Hands, where I sold my homemade jellies and jams. I learned key business and time management skills all while making an impact in my community by donating the profits to local non-profit organizations. I met my Physical Fitness goal by increasing my overall endurance through dedicating time to workout each day. I was able to increase my plank time from 30 seconds to 4 minutes throughout the course of the Congressional Award. I also took various fitness classes such as Zumba and HIIT training. For my Expedition I planned various running routes in West Virginia while traveling with a runner. I was also responsible for updating her social media pages throughout the run and for scoping out roads as her support crew. I learned how to roll with the unexpected punches of traveling. The Congressional Award has immensely shaped me as a person and my future plans; I am eternally grateful for this program and all that I have learned from the experiences it has provided.

---

**Samantha Jurkowski**  
*Laramie, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

I spent a lot of my time working to make my community a cleaner place, as well as worked hands on with my local animal shelter. Whether it was picking up trash with my FFA group or spending time working with the animal shelter, my time was spent giving back to the community. I have played piano for as long as I can remember, but a few years ago I started to prioritize other things and fell away from practicing. For Personal Development, I decided to learn a song I had always wanted to learn. I ran track and cross country in high school. For my Physical Fitness goal I wanted to decrease my 5k time by thirty seconds. I was able to decrease it by a minute! In the summer of 2016, my family and I went on a trip to Breckenridge, CO that I planned. We experienced things together that we had never before and really grew together as a family. The Congressional Award helped me appreciate all the things I was already doing in my life, and recognize everything else I could do if I just made the time to give back to my community and myself.

**Maeve Knepper**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Diane White*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

Throughout the course of the Congressional Award program, I volunteered in my community through theatrical advocacy projects that raised awareness for human trafficking and child soldiers. I helped at various benefits and fundraisers throughout my community for groups such as the Boys and Girls Club. For Personal Development, I competed at speech and debate tournaments and attended several hours of practices a week. Speech and debate has helped me to stay informed and speak out about issues that matter to me, personally, but are also relevant to the world. For Physical Fitness, I took dance classes. I learned the importance of perseverance, as I had to work hard to learn the choreography and build up flexibility. For the Exploration, I planned an excursion around Long Island, N.Y. which included visiting museums and historical sites in the area, as well as a solo trip into Manhattan. The Congressional Award program taught me the importance of individual growth in order to help others. By working towards Personal Development and Physical Fitness goals and growing as a person, I was better able to serve the community as a whole.



---

**Kamry Knotwell**

*Encampment, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Trista Ostrom*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

To earn the Gold Medal, I volunteered for our local food pantry gathering and delivering food to those in need. I served in various officer capacities for my 4-H club and FFA chapter. I also attended a multi-day camping and service retreat in Yellowstone assisting the Forest Service with projects. For Personal Development I raised show cattle and breeding beef projects by selecting, managing and showing at local, county and state levels. I exhibited the Wyoming State Fair Champion of Champions Market Steer. I reached my Physical Fitness goal by riding my horses, practicing roping daily, and working on my upper body strength to improve my roping skill level. I felt confident to enter my first rodeo. For my Expedition I planned a 5 day 4 night trip to South Dakota with a good friend. I visited Mount Rushmore, Bear Country, Deadwood, and Devil's Tower among other sites and I did all of the driving. The Congressional Award experience has helped me grow as an individual, gain confidence in myself, persevere and meet new people.

**Selena Landa**

*Rawlins, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Judy Stepp*

*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

For Voluntary Public Service, I have participated in Best Buddies and Special Olympics. The two programs have allowed me to mentor others while building friendships with a variety of unique individuals! Personal Development guided me on my path to satisfy my desire to finally do something outside of my average routine. I am able to say that I am close to being bilingual in English and Signed Exact English (SEE)! The Physical Fitness aspect helped me realize that I am capable of pushing myself to work hard on my own, fulfilling my desire to become a stronger athlete for tennis and baseball. Seattle, Washington, was the chosen destination for my Exploration; it was this exploration that changed my vision of the future. I discovered and explored my true passion for medicine through this remarkable experience! The Congressional Award has broadened my perspective of the world, particularly in my ability to consistently demonstrate my compassion for helping and healing others. I can now confidently picture myself as an astounding trauma and pediatric surgeon in the future.

---

**Megan Leavitt**

*Rock Springs, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Marianna Pizzato*

My volunteering improved because I take the initiative to help with events even when I am not seeking hours. I take pride and respect in our community and want to make it a better place to live in. I volunteered in various areas and know that this is something I will continue to do as I grow older. I increased my Personal Development and leadership skills by joining RSHS Student Council and babysat kids in my community. By using my leadership and organizational skills, I was able to organize and raise money for our High School events and activities. I also was able to earn a spot in our High Schools FLLA. Physical Fitness is an area that comes easier for me because I have been dancing since I was two years old. However, my goal was to increase my dance skills to make it on my High School's dance team. I succeeded at this goal and made the team at the end of my Freshman year. I continue enjoy gaining new skills at dance. For my Expedition I went to Idaho with my family for 5 days and 4 nights. This trip kept me very busy since I was the one planning everything. I planned the food, the activities, set up the camp site, and kept everything clean. It was a lot of fun and I learned a lot about myself. I cannot express enough how this program has made me a better teenager and person. I encourage all to participate in this program. It is AMAZING!!

**Araceli Ledesma Miranda**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

The Congressional Award allowed me to expand my world and develop a greater sense of community. I volunteered a lot of time at local schools and various nonprofit organizations. I helped put together projects and helped to plan lessons. For my Personal Development I formed a greater sense of responsibility through my job at Little America. In addition I improved my driving skills. For Physical Fitness I walked for at least 30 minutes every day. For my Expedition I went to Idaho and explored a new place trying many activities that I would not have been exposed to otherwise.

---

**Carmen Leon**

*Laramie, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Meredith McLaughlin*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I volunteer in my community by helping homeless cats at Laramie Animal Welfare Society (LAWS), being a teen advisor for the Wyoming Latina Youth Conference, and serving as president of Sources of Strength at Laramie High School. At LAWS, I helped socialize kittens and helped clean the cat kennels. For Personal Development, I made vegetarian meals every Sunday, including Puerto Rican dishes and food from around the world. For Physical Fitness I have had cheer practice twice a week and have cheered football, wrestling, volleyball, and basketball, including two University of Wyoming basketball games. Lastly, my Expedition was a week of camping in Yellowstone with my family and best friend. From the Congressional Award I have learned how to set goals and work hard for what I want.

**Arianna Lewis**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

To earn the Gold Congressional Award Medal, I volunteered at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum. I started helping with children's camps and eventually became the camp education content manager; curating crafts and lessons. For Personal Development, my goal was to improve my state standing for speech and debate. Over the past three years I participated in more than 40 tournaments. I have been a national qualifier for two years in a row. This year I have two state championship titles. For Physical Fitness, I improved my nutrition and health knowledge by being more engaged in all aspects of food planning, gathering, and preparation. My Exploration was amazing. I planned a two week trip to Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark to see my sister who was studying abroad. The Congressional Award was an amazing lesson in how hard work and dedication through goal setting can help you achieve more than you thought possible.

---

**Taylor Maese**  
*Casper, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Chase Olsen*  
*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

My Voluntary Public Service goals were achieved by giving my time to help with school organized activities, reading to elementary students, and helping with Special Olympic downhill ski races. My Personal Development goals were achieved by learning how to drive, taking piano lessons, and learning how to play the ukulele. My Physical Fitness goals were achieved by attending all of my summer weight lifting sessions, preparing for football in the fall during all 4 years I was in high school. My Exploration goal was achieved by coordinating a trip to Orlando, Florida, where I competed in USA National Power Lifting competition. My experience while earning the Congressional Award was one that I will never forget and will be cherished for years to come.

**Jazy Manoukian**  
*Jackson, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Lori Shockley*

I volunteered for Grand Teton Skating Association and JH Therapeutic Riding Association. In both instances, I assisted in classes, in maintaining equipment, and in daily operations. For Personal Development, I attended weekly piano classes and regularly worked to learn the Armenian language through Pimsleur courses. I was also able to practice my language skills by taking a one month trip to Armenia. For Physical Fitness, I practiced figure skating techniques through weekly on-ice sessions. In the off-season, I continued to hone my abilities through off-ice training. For my Exploration, I conducted a ghost town tour throughout the southern portion of Montana. I toured and discovered the histories of each town and documented their connections. The Congressional Award has proven to me that I can indeed accomplish long-term goals.

---

**Claudia Miller**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Linda Dixon*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

While earning the Gold Medal, I had diverse volunteer experiences involving many aspects of STEM and education. For me, the most rewarding experience was volunteering at the local Botanic Gardens and assisting with kid's classes about conservation and gardening. For Personal Development, I focused on many aspects of music. I learned a new instrument after finding my great-great-grandfather's violin, and continued to play my viola at the All-State conference. For my Physical Fitness goals, I worked to improve my cross-country running times. Over three seasons and more than 300 hours, I dropped 2 full minutes in the 5K. For my Expedition, I kayaked approximately 6 miles per day in the Bighorn Canyon. I was able to experience some of my state's natural water resources and the spectacular canyon scenery. Overall, the Congressional Award pushed me to take small ideas and interests, and grow them into tangible, achievable goals.

**Audrey Mitchell**

*Casper, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Chase Olsen*

*Affiliations: 4-H, National Honor Society*

For Volunteer Public Service, I volunteered at Wyoming Medical Center in Casper. I also volunteered for the Jerry Behrens Foundation and helped organize two concerts with the Lander Volunteer Fire Department Pipe Band to raise money for the foundation. For Personal Development, I practiced my bagpipes at least five times a week. I also worked as a lifeguard at Mike Sedar Pool and a swim instructor for Swim America during the summer. For Physical Fitness, I have been a varsity swimmer for the Kelly Walsh High School Girls Swim and Dive team. I practiced in and out of season totaling about 20 hours a week. For my Exploration, I organized a family trip to Europe. I researched local historical sights to visit. I also learned common phrases in foreign languages in order to help navigate. The Congressional Award is an important component in helping me to grow as an individual; additionally, it has influenced me to continue to better myself as a student and as a person.

---

**Junuenth Morales**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

I volunteered for many different organizations. I volunteered for two consecutive summers at Cheyenne Frontier Days as well as many Elementary Schools in Cheyenne. For my Personal Development goal, I started out by cooking with my mom. After I learned from my mom, I started meal prepping for myself. For Physical Fitness, I was able to run a mile in under six minutes. I was also able to meet my squat goal which was 160. For my Expedition I went on a camping trip with my family. Overall, I learned a lot about myself while working towards The Congressional Award Gold Medal.

**Abby Morillon**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*  
*Affiliations: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Key Club*

I volunteered at my local Boys and Girls club, where my goal was to get out of my comfort zone and be able to plan and schedule activities for children. I also organized a Greenway clean up, through Key club. We picked up trash on the sidewalks around the school. My Personal Development consisted of being more creative. I joined more clubs, one of which was art club. I was able to improve my artistic abilities. In college I also joined Student Government, which was a big step out of my comfort zone. I learned a lot about myself. My Physical Fitness goal was to do extra work outside of soccer. I weight lifted and ran extra before or after practice. Yoga was a different type of fitness I wanted to incorporate with my soccer workouts. For my Exploration, I went to San Francisco. My goal was to plan an amazing trip with a tight budget. I had to look on the internet for great hotel room deals and interesting places to visit. I was lucky enough to find a CITY PASS which allowed me to see many hot spots of San Francisco.

---

**Tommy Neal**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

For Voluntary Public Service, I helped coach youth wrestling along with youth football. I was also a part of G-Team, which is a select group that helps incoming freshman transition into High School. For my Personal Development, I worked with my dad in our shop building various things for our family and for our house. For Physical Fitness, I would go to wrestling and football practices and lift weights to improve my overall strength. I also would do physical therapy exercises to strengthen my knee. For my Expedition, I went camping with friends to Sand Lake. Goals of ours were to learn more about the area and how to wake board.

**Adelle Ostrom**  
*Cody, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Ashli Koster*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

My Voluntary Public Service consisted of working at my local vet clinic and at free spay and neuter clinics put on by the local animal shelter. I also gave showmanship clinics to 4-H kids and helped them with their projects at county fair. With my FFA chapter I did community agriculture expos to raise agriculture awareness. I showed animals in 4-H for ten years and FFA for four years. I showed rabbits, chickens, cattle, pigs, dogs, cats, and horses. I was heavily involved in dance for 13 years; the last seven at Cody Center for the Performing Arts, where I was an assistant teacher and student. I was also on the performance and competition teams and did a solo competition. My main styles were ballet/pointe, and lyrical/contemporary/modern. For my Exploration, I went to Waimea, Hawaii on the big island of Hawaii. There I explored local traditions, customs, and food. I booked the flight myself and contacted local residents to help me find activities and places to eat while I was there. My overall experience in earning the Congressional Award has been an amazing feeling of accomplishment. This program has changed my life for the better. I also learned that if I apply myself I can accomplish anything, no matter how daunting or impossible a challenge may seem.

---

**Kendra Ostrom**  
*Powell, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Tiffany Herring*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

I volunteered extensively through the Shoshone National Forest and the Bridger Teton National Forest by clearing trail and revitalizing areas for the public to utilize. I also volunteered for the Wyoming Congressional Award to help the executive director with events and preparation. My Personal Development goal was to work with yearling horses and develop them into horses that I could ride by the time they were older. I also worked for the Forest Service during the summers when I was in college to learn more about trail crew management. My Physical Fitness goal began as a running goal and it ended after I had an accident and broke my elbow. I went to physical therapy and did exercises daily to improve my ability to bend and straighten my arm. I am not back to full working ability but I hope to be at some point. My Expedition was a trip to the Thorofare with one of my friends where we rode horses several miles into the wilderness. We spent several days riding our horses, fishing, and embracing the outdoors while also cooking over a fire, eating our fish and camping. The Congressional Award has taught me that no matter how busy you are, there is always a way to help someone else and there is always time to better ourselves.

**Julianna Pizzato**  
*Rock Springs, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Daulton Grube*

I volunteered in my community at many events such as the National High School Finals Rodeo, Cowboys Against Cancer, blood drives, and Make-A-Wish. I helped run the Wyoming Congressional Award Golf Tournaments in Jackson Hole and participated each summer in the Service Retreats. For Personal Development, I improved my leadership skills by serving as my class secretary on Student council, improved my cooking and interior design skills, and spent the last year researching treatment options for a disease with which I have been diagnosed. My Physical Fitness goals were to improve my dance skills. I practiced several times per week and I was able to move to a higher competition level as well as score high points at a competition. I executed a 5 day, 4 night camping Expedition at Green River Lakes, Wyoming. I learned how to both fly and cast fish in rivers, from the shore and from a canoe. I also explored miles of the beautiful mountain range. Through the Congressional Award I have learned how to volunteer and that I love giving back to others. I believe it has changed the focus of my life to be of service to others. I know that even a youth can make a difference in other people's lives and I want to always be that person who is helping others make that most of their lives.



---

**Ruth Potter**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

*Affiliations: HOBY*

I volunteered through the Cheyenne Fiddle Orchestra and Strolling Strings through multiple performances in the community. Outside of performing, I volunteered at the CFD Old West Museum by working at the front desk, helping visitors find their way through the museum and Cheyenne. For Personal Development, I took private lessons and practiced my viola to better my performance ability. I also taught young kids how to swim, learning how to better convey teaching points. For Physical Fitness I swam on our high school and club teams. I was also a captain on the East High School girls swim team, aiming not only to better my abilities, but to help others achieve their goals. My Expedition in South Dakota was to put on an annual camping fundraiser for cystic fibrosis. I learned about working with others, relaxing, and having fun even in stressful times. This Expedition was similar to other camping trips I have done before, but the experiences were some I won't forget. The Congressional Award program has taught me how much volunteers really help a community through its businesses, clubs, members, and so much more. To me, the program shows the real value of hard work and dedication, and how you not only benefit yourself

**Emily Purifoy**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I volunteered with the local animal shelter, as well as school carnivals and events. I also went to nursing homes and played my cello with an ensemble. For Personal Development, I worked with veterinarians in my local area to gain experience in the field. I also worked on driving and crocheting. For Physical Fitness, I was a referee for soccer, which required running up to three miles per game. I had to stay in shape throughout the off season as well, which included running and hiking. For my Expedition, I planned a trip to Keystone, Colorado and planned meals for the trip and a few excursions, such as paddle boarding. The Congressional Award taught me a lot about perseverance and the value of that; as it taught me that my goals are achievable if I work hard enough.

---

**Haley Purifoy**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

To earn my Gold Medal, I worked as a manager for my high school's boys basketball team. I also volunteered at elementary school events, where I worked with kids to show them that learning can be fun. During the summer I volunteered at Cheyenne Frontier Days by being a rodeo usher and working slack. For Personal Development, I wrote a full length novel that I will one day publish. I also worked on my photography skills, becoming proficient enough that my sister wanted me to do her senior pictures. For Physical Fitness, I refereed youth soccer games. I judged my fitness level on the number of higher level games that I could do in a day. My best was three back to back games with a lower level game after a short break. Lastly, my Expedition was to Keystone, Colorado where I planned five days of activities for my sister, friends, and myself. We hardly followed the plan because of unforeseen circumstances, like weather, but we still had fun, nonetheless. The Congressional Award has made me into a better people person, even into a leader by teaching me the values organization, planning, and commitment in anything that I do.

**Chloe Rankin**  
*Gillette, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Diana Enzi*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

I volunteered through a summer science camp working on STEM with youth in my community and volunteered at the local science center. I also volunteered through the Women's Resource Center in Gillette, helping families in need. For my Personal Development I enhanced my sewing skills, and learned many new techniques. I even made a dress, which is something I had never done before! To complete my Physical Fitness goals, I went through many long hours of training. One of my goals being 80% accurate volleyball serves, and I now have 100% accuracy in games. My other Physical Fitness goal was to go 26 and a ½ feet in triple jump and I'm now able to jump 30 feet consistently. For my Expedition, I went on a five day trip to Yellowstone, something I had never seen, even after living in Wyoming for 14 years. This was a fun, new experience where I was able to enjoy nature and have fun times with my family. The Congressional Award taught me many things over these past two years, I can't underestimate myself and I can never give up on the goals that I set for myself. All it takes is a little motivation and a lot of dedication.

---

**Dylan Raymond**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*  
*Affiliations: Boy Scouts of America*

I volunteered through Boy Scouts with food drives, Eagle Scout projects, community development projects, and by mentoring younger scouts. I also volunteered with IB and various East High clubs, such as Wyoming Academic Challenge, Key Club, and FBLA, serving dinners and helping with food drives. My Personal Development goals were to improve my driving skills and to increase my reading exposure. I got many practice hours of driving to get my license and got better in various situations, including snowy and icy roads. I also read for many hours and expanded my reading selection. My Physical Fitness goal was to increase my overall strength, which I measured with my bicep curl. To work on this, I regularly went to the gym and became more conscientious about what I was eating. My Expedition was at Camp New Fork in Cora, Wyoming. While at the camp I helped younger scouts learn valuable life skills. I also gained valuable skills myself and had fun and interacted with others, by participation in merit badge workshops such as swimming, climbing, archery, and chess. By participating in the Congressional Award, I not only developed as a person with both fitness and experience, but I also gained an understanding of how much we really can make a difference in our communities.

**Nicole Reyes-Aguilar**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

For Voluntary Public Service, I helped raise \$4,000 for a non-profit organization called Unaccompanied Students Initiative that helps build homes for homeless youth students in my community. This was done through collecting donations, hosting school events, and partnering up with local restaurants. For Personal Development, I worked at a local restaurant both during the school year and over summer. I also participated and held many positions in multiple school clubs including being the President of my DECA chapter, and the Vice-President of my National Honors Society chapter. For Physical Fitness, I began by taking short 30 minute walks and then began to do home workouts. I later began to take Zumba classes and Strong by Zumba classes that included cardio and muscle conditioning workouts. For my Exploration, my family and I wanted to travel on a road trip for summer, so I recommended going to Las Vegas and Los Angeles. I choose these two cities because both of the cities are rich in diversity and culture that would allow me to explore new things. The Congressional Award program has given me the opportunity to expand my horizons and explore new things about myself and help serve my local community.

---

**Grace Ritschard**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

*Affiliations: National Honor Society, United States Air Force*

I served my community with over 600 hours of service at local organizations, including Cheyenne Frontier Days, the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens, and the Old West Museum. I also served the Air Force Airmen and Family Readiness Center and the F. E. Warren Air Force Base Spouses' Club. I spent over 600 hours of practice, lessons, and recitals completing my Personal Development goal of learning and memorizing over 15 challenging classical piano pieces. I performed my memorized pieces at esteemed piano auditions, including National Guild of Piano Teachers and Area Achievement Day. For Physical Fitness, I set a goal to strengthen my arms and back in order to improve my balance and ballet (fouette) turns. I spent over 600 hours in dance rehearsals, classes, performances, and photoshoots. As a result, I successfully achieved my goal of strengthening my arm and back muscles. I chose to lead a 5-day, 4-night backpacking for my Expedition. I planned the route, food, and schedule for this backpacking trip through the backcountry of Colorado. Throughout my four years of participation in the Congressional Award, I learned to work diligently, to persevere despite a variety of challenges, and to exhibit servant leadership.

**Lauren Salsgiver**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

*Affiliations: 4-H, Key Club, National Honor Society*

To complete my Voluntary Public Service goals I worked with various organizations and my high school to involve as many community members as possible in service projects. Many of these service projects I organized and executed. Key Club was the most influential club in helping me reach my goals. To complete my Personal Development goals I aided disabled children in physical therapy, learning how to establish patient relationships, and improved my customer service skills to prepare myself for my future career. I also painted, both watercolor and acrylic, to improve my artistic abilities. To complete my Physical Fitness goals I joined Pink Gloves Boxing and tested out of tier one into tier two. I have grown to love boxing. I also regularly lifted weights to keep myself in healthy shape. To complete my Expedition I researched activities and housing in Florence, Italy. I booked my chosen activities and navigated around Florence when my family arrived there. I feel I have grown to appreciate the reward of helping others and personal growth tremendously through The Congressional Award.

---

**Kathryn Sauerwein**

*Cody, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Maggie Kirkham*

*Affiliations: 4-H*

For Voluntary Public Service, I worked with the Wyoming Outfitter's and Guides Association at various events to promote the industry in Wyoming. I also volunteered with a horse facility and the fairgrounds in my local community. Lastly, I volunteered at my high school to help with prom and other events. My Personal Development goal was to learn more about raising and exhibiting pigs and steers at the county fair. I didn't show steers until my last two years of 4-H so I had to learn how to feed them, take care of them, groom them and ultimately exhibit them. I have always loved running so my Physical Fitness goal revolved around improving my 5K time for competition. I ran the 2 mile in track and ran cross country in high school. I also ran indoor track. I received a scholarship to run track and cross country in college and am currently competing. I went on my Expedition with my dad into the mountains. I rode on horseback where I camped and experienced the outdoors. I learned how to cook, pack, communicate and help to make my trip a success. The Congressional Award has taught me how to give of myself to others and how to participate in community activities that I may not have otherwise volunteered for.

**Abigail Shameklis**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

For Voluntary Public Service, I taught health in a preschool and collected toy donations and baby supplies for children and new mothers in the hospital. I went on two volunteer retreats where we volunteered with Meals on Wheels, Foster Closet, and picked up trash in state parks. I held an art show to raise money for BDAR. I held a job in retail to learn responsibility and people skills. I also held a job at a child care center to prepare myself for a career in teaching. I was my chapter's president of Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America to develop leadership and public speaking skills. I participated in ballet and lyrical classes throughout high school to improve my strength and flexibility. I went on a road trip through Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina with my family. We tried a lot of new food and I learned a lot about the culture and history of the south. Participating in The Congressional Award motivated me to get involved in new experiences which were hard work, but they were also very rewarding. I have many great memories from my experiences with The Congressional Award!

---

**Jakob Shuey**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

I completed my Voluntary Public Service requirement by helping repair instruments for my community through the help of a local luthier and violin teacher. I started out by working with bigger instruments, but gradually worked my way up to higher end violins for older students. To complete my Personal Development goals I really focused on my musicianship as I am very passionate about music and especially the violin. I focused on it by making it a requirement that I practiced a minimum of an hour a day on my violin, but would practice at my discretion after that hour. I wanted to really focus on my cardio and in an effort to lose weight I started a plan to improve my mile time. When I first started I was running a 12 minute mile but by the end of the programme, I have shortened it down to a 5 minute mile which is a bit shy of where I wanted it to be. I visited Northern France in an effort to learn more of the history of the region and the culture. I visited museums and walked around the local towns to really be immersed in the French culture. I also took the time to learn French from locals. Overall it was a great experience of learning. I have loved the whole Congressional Award programme and it has taught me a lot about myself and my role in the communities of which I am a part.

**Colby Stockton**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*  
*Affiliations: 4-H*

For Voluntary Public Service, I volunteered at the Cheyenne Animal Shelter, helping animals in need. I also attended two Wyoming Volunteer Retreats and assisted in planning the second. I also volunteered at the 2018 Golf Fundraiser for the Wyoming Congressional Award. For Personal Development, I practiced blacksmithing and tried to build my tool inventory. I also worked to better my cattle and showed them at several large livestock shows and now have my own herd. For Physical Fitness, I ran track and cross country for my high school and continued to improve personal records every time I could. I also shot 4-H archery in local, county, and state competitions. Lastly, for my Exploration, I went to Hawai'i and worked to expand my cultural knowledge and and enjoyed the Hawai'ian experience.

---

**Nicole Talkington**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Trista Ostrom*

I volunteered by serving my school within the Burns High School Student Council, teaching kids in my area how to shoot, and serving as Chairman for the Wyoming Congressional Award Service Retreats of 2017 and 2018. I developed my leadership by serving as my school's student body president and vice president and by participating in the Junior Leadership of Laramie County. I also developed by learning to drive. For Physical Fitness, I competed in cross country and track. In between seasons I ran around my neighborhood and lifted weights. I completed my Expedition in the Medicine Bow National Forrest. I explored the opportunities within outdoor cooking, hiking, fishing, kayaking, and much more. I also documented my expedition with a GoPro I won from the Congressional Award GoPro Challenge. Thanks to Congressional Award, my advisor, and my supporters, I have been inspired to keep developing and improving myself every day and I am forever grateful.

**Amelia Van Winkle**  
*Cheyenne, Wyoming*  
*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*  
*Affiliations: National Honor Society*

In earning my Gold Medal, I completed more than 400 hours of Voluntary Public Service with the majority coming from the Wyoming Historic Governor's Mansion. I helped maintain the grounds and provided needed miscellaneous work to make sure the Mansion remained open to the public. For Personal Development, I participated in the Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) program practicing most Saturdays. I earned a 6-star pin through practice, which meant I scored 200 points in 10 rounds. For my Physical Fitness portion, I trained at the Universal Kempo Karate School with the goal of becoming a Junior Brown Belt. I'm now a Junior Brown Belt-Advanced which required a 2-hour test consisting of endurance, strength and knowledge. For my Physical Fitness portion, I trained at the Universal Kempo Karate School with the goal of becoming a Junior Brown Belt. I'm now a Junior Brown Belt-Advanced which required a 2-hour test consisting of endurance, strength and knowledge. Finally, my Expedition was a trip to Hawaii which required planning for each island, like when and how my family would tour Kilauea. Overall, the Congressional Award Program has shown me I am capable of doing things and learning new things, while also making an impact in other people's lives as well as my own.

---

**Cassidy Weibel**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

*Affiliations: 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

To earn the Gold Medal, I completed over 400 hours of Voluntary Public service. I volunteered through the Wyoming Congressional Award by helping plan and execute the annual Wyoming Congressional Award service retreat. For Personal Development I served as my school's student body Vice President, developing my leadership skills. I attended the Wyoming Association of Student Councils and brought back ideas for my school and community. I improved my free throw percentage in basketball for my Physical Fitness goal, and even made 10 free throws in a row during games in my regular basketball season. I planned a trip to South Dakota for my Exploration. I visited small towns, rode a train, rode horseback, and tried new things throughout the trip, including riding a zip line for the first time. The Congressional Award was a great experience that allowed me to meet new people and get more involved in my community.

**Eleccia Wells**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Misty Whetstone*

I volunteered to help with several companies within my community. I went on two of the Congressional Award retreats, built a deck, collected money for Salvation Army and for new mothers at the hospital, and so much more! I love to volunteer and thank The Congressional Award for this opportunity. I did things that I never thought I would be able to do if I didn't have this program. For Physical Fitness, I tracked my steps everyday when I was at school and at work. I went to the gym at least three times a week. For my Exploration, I planned a trip to Cancun, Mexico, where we went scuba diving, tried new foods, and traveled to different islands to see the different ways locals live. I continued to volunteer and push myself throughout the program, school, and my life at home. By joining Congressional Award I learned so much about myself and how I love to help others.



---

**Taylor Wilson**

*Cheyenne, Wyoming*

*Advisor: Dianne Kirkbride*

*Affiliations: Special Olympics*

I volunteered as a Cheyenne Frontier Days Dandy. My responsibilities included performing with fifteen other girls on an equestrian drill team, traveling throughout Wyoming and Colorado, advertising Cheyenne Frontier Days, and promoting the sport of rodeo. I chose to improve my cooking skills for personal development by searching for new recipes, collecting recipes from family, and putting together my own recipes. I enjoy being able to cook for family and friends; especially during the holidays, while camping or hunting, and for birthdays. As a way to stay in shape, I chose to improve my horse riding skills and bond with my horse through time in the saddle. Riding horses requires a large amount of balance and strength. I focused on strengthening my core to help with balance while in the saddle and strengthening my shoulder for Dandies. For my expedition, I planned a 5 day, 4 night hunting trip with my father and a family friend to Battle Mountain in Wyoming. I learned to set up outfitter tents and use wood burning stoves. While hunting, we hiked many miles, observed many types of wildlife, and cooked meals over an open fire. The Congressional Award has been an enriching experience that has allowed me to achieve many goals, learn perseverance and pride, and has taught me that working hard is the key to success.

---

*Thank You to Our Lead Supporters*



BlueCross BlueShield  
Association



The KinderCare Education™ Family of Brands



---

## *We Would Like to Acknowledge*

AARP  
Abbott Laboratories  
AbbVie Inc.  
Aflac Incorporated  
Altria Group, Inc.  
American Airlines Group Inc.  
American Gaming Association  
American Trucking Association  
AmeriSourceBergen Corporation  
Amgen Inc.  
Anne Bruce  
Arnold & Porter LLP  
Aufrecht Foundation  
Marc Baer  
Paxton and Rachel Baker  
Bank of America  
Bayer Corporation  
Ed Blansitt  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association  
Beverly Gilyard  
BNSF  
Boeing  
BP  
Bridgestone Firestone  
Bristol-Myers Squibb  
Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck,  
LLP  
Ceasars Entertainment  
Corporation  
Celgene  
Century Link  
Comcast Corporation  
CSX  
Mitch Draizin  
Edward Jones  
Entertainment Software  
Association  
FedEx Corporation  
Florida Power & Light  
FMC Corporation  
Fraport USA  
G2 Secure Staff, LLC  
Dr. Larry Green  
Jonathan Heafitz  
David Hunt  
International Leadership  
Foundation  
Intuit  
Johnson & Johnson  
Brad Johnson  
JM Family Enterprises  
KinderCare  
Lee Klumpp  
Brad Knox

---

## *We Would Like to Acknowledge*

Kountoupes Denham

Kroger

Larry H. Miller Companies

Chris Leahy

Lockheed Martin Corporation

Sherry Maddox

Magdaleno Institute

Lance Mangum

McGuire Woods

Merck & Co., Inc.

Microsoft Corporation

National Association of  
Broadcasters

National Beer Wholesalers  
Association

Mike & Laura O'Connor

Otsuka America Pharmaceutical,  
Inc.

Peabody

Pharmaceutical Care Management  
Association

PhRMA

Mike Pitts

Rite Aid

Steve Roberts

David Schiappa

Shell Oil

Mike Skahill

Rodney Slater

Smithfield Foods, Inc.

Chris Spear

Kimberly Talley

TD Bank

T-Mobile

United Rentals

United Technologies

Valero Energy

Jason Van Pelt

Verizon Communications Inc.

Viacom Inc.

Win Roberti

Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of  
America

# *Congressional Award Partners*

4-H

American Red Cross

AmeriCorps NCCC

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Boy Scouts of America

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Civil Air Patrol

Discovery Bound NLC

Girl Scouts of the USA

Habitat for Humanity

HOBY

Lion's Heart Foundation

Military Family Advisory Network

People to People International

United States Air Force

YMCA

Youth Service America



***The Congressional Award Foundation***  
***Board Officers***

**Chairman**

Paxton K. Baker\*  
*Washington Nationals*

**Vice Chairman**

Secretary Rodney Slater\*  
*Squire Patton Boggs*

**Vice Chairman**

Shawn Whitman  
*FMC Corporation*

**Secretary**

Laura O'Connor\*  
*Utah*  
*Congressional Award Medalist*

**Treasurer**

Lee Klumpp  
*BDO USA*

**National Director**

Erica Heyse

# *The Congressional Award Foundation*

## *Board Members*

**Marc Baer\***

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota

**Edward Blansitt III**

Montgomery County Inspector General

**Romero Brown\***

Georgia

*Congressional Award Medalist*

**Anne Bruce**

Johnson & Johnson

**Nick Cannon\***

California

**Edward Cohen**

Lerner Enterprises

**Anthony Crowell**

New York Law School

*Congressional Award Medalist*

**Kathy R. Didawick**

BlueCross BlueShield Association

**Hon. Debbie Dingell\***

U.S. Representative

Michigan's 12<sup>th</sup> District

**Mitchell Draizin\***

New York

**Larry Duncan**

Lockheed Martin Corporation

**Melissa Cortese Foxman**

Entertainment Software Association

**Beverly Gilyard**

AARP

**Patrick Gliha**

Celgene

**George Gould**

Washington, DC

**Raymond Hall**

Miller Management Corporation

**J. Steven Hart, Esq.\***

Washington, DC

**Jonathan Heafitz**

PCMA

**Jesse Hill**

Edward Jones

**Hon. Richard Hudson\***

U.S. Representative

North Carolina's 8<sup>th</sup> District

**David W. Hunt, Esq.\***

Legal Counsel

**Hon. Johnny Isakson\***

U.S. Senator

Georgia

**Hon. Sheila Jackson Lee\***

U.S. Representative

Texas' 18<sup>th</sup> District

**Raymond F. Kerins Jr.**

Bayer U.S. LLC

# *The Congressional Award Foundation*

## *Board Members*

**Bradley Knox, Esq.**  
Aflac

**David Schiappa\***  
The Duberstein Group

**Karlos LaSane\***  
Caesars Entertainment

**Karen Sessions**  
Texas

**Christopher Leahy**  
Intuit

**Michael Skahill**  
Smithfield Foods

**Mateo Magdaleno\***  
IDQ Group  
*Congressional Award Medalist*

**Chris Spear**  
American Trucking Associations

**Hon. Joe Manchin\***  
U.S. Senator  
West Virginia

**Kim Talley\***  
G2 Secure Staff

**Chiling Tong\***  
International Leadership Foundation

**Lance Mangum**  
FedEx Corporation

**Kelsey Troy**  
KinderCare Education

**Dr. Linda Mitchell**  
North Mississippi Research & Extension  
Center

**Jason Van Pelt**  
Crossroads Strategies

**Michael Pitts\***  
Wisconsin

**Rita Vaswani\***  
Nevada State Bank

**Steven Roberts\***  
The Roberts Companies

**Kathryn Weeden\***  
U.S. Senate Page School

**Molly Ryan**  
Otsuka America Pharmaceutical Inc.

**Ben Zandi**  
Fraport USA

*National/appointed members denoted by asterisk (\*)*



*The Congressional Award Foundation*  
*Advisory Board Members*

**Simeon Banister**

New York

**David Falk**

FAME

**Dr. Larry Green**

Maryland

**Adrian Harpool**

Adrian Harpool Associates

**Dr. Brian Johnson**

Advance Higher Ed

**Beth Ann Ruoff**

Washington, DC

**Will Stute**

Washington, DC

*The Congressional Award Foundation  
Thanks Our Title Sponsor*



*for supporting America's  
young achievers.*

*More than 80 businesses  
united by one goal:  
Enriching lives.*

**[www.lhm.com](http://www.lhm.com)**